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The Jamesian Self: A Phenomenology of Selfhood

James Mullane
Loyola University Chicago

THE JAMESIAN SELF:

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELFHOOD

by

James Mullane

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VITA

The author, James Mullane, is the son of John P. Mullane and Margaret (Hopkins) Mullane. He was born June 10, 1946, in Chicago, Illinois.

He received his secondary education at Mendel Catholic High School, Chicago, Illinois. In June, 1969 he graduated Magnum Cum Laude from St. Joseph's College, Calumet Campus. At St. Joseph's College he earned the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in philosophy. In 1971 he was awarded the NDEA Fellowship by Loyola University of Chicago. In June, 1973 he was granted the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy. In 1977 he was awarded a Loyola University Dissertation Fellowship.

Before attending graduate school, he taught in the Chicago Public School System at the elementary level. After receiving his Master of Arts in Philosophy, he taught philosophy courses as a part-time instructor at Loyola University of Chicago and at Oakton Community College.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

What is the self? Each of us knows the meaning of this term until we are asked to define it. It is only then that we realize that to give an accurate account of the self is "the most difficult of philosophic tasks."[1] James struggled with the problem of the self in a number of works that spanned his entire philosophical career. His radical experiential approach to the problem of the self is still being studied and interpreted by scholars today. No teaching of James, however, has been more subject to misunderstanding.

The philosophical literature surrounding James' theory of the self continues to grow both in size and diversity. Each interpreter of James tends to see his own James. Interpretations of James' doctrine of the self have run the gamut from those which insist he denies the existence of the self to those which maintain he believes in a substantial self. There are those who feel that James identified the self with the physical body and still others who are convinced that he has reduced it to the present fleeting pulse of consciousness. Amongst Jamesian scholars, there exist little agreement concerning the essense of his theory of the self. John Dewey once argued that James was moving

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[1]William James, The Principles of Psychology, 3 Vols. ed. F. Burkhardt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), I, p. 220. (Hereafter — Principles)

towards a behavioristic account of the self.[2] Milic Čapek insists, however, that James rejected the behavioristic interpretation of the self.[3] James Edie has recently tried to demonstrate that James was really developing a phenomenlogical approach to the problem of the self.[4] In response to the growing phenomenological interpretation of James, Andrew Reck has argued that James was steering a middle course between Phenomenology and Behaviorism in his treatment of the self.[5] As if the confusion created by these conflicting interpretations wasn't enough, John Shea has contributed to the controversy by arguing that James offered numerous theories of the self that he never bothered to reconcile.[6] As a whole, the literature on the Jamesian self reflects the enormous amount of ambiguity and complexity which is present in James' writings concerning the self. It is James' own confusing richness that has spawned such diverse disciples.

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[2]John Dewey, "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James," Journal of Philosophy, 37 (1940), pp. 589-599.

[3]Milic Capek, "The Reappearance of the Self in the Last Philosophy of William James," Philosophical Review, 62 (1953), p. 526.

[4]James Edie, "The Genesis of a Phenomenological Theory of the Experience of Personal Identity: William James on Consciousness and the Self," Man and World, 6 (Summer, 1973) pp. 293-312.

[5]John Shea, "The Self in William James," Philosophy Today, 17 (Winter, 1973), pp. 319-327.

Although the recent revival of interest in the philosophy of William James has been mainly due to the efforts of those thinkers who emphasize the phenomenological and existential character of his thought, James has been the subject of interest for a variety of philosophical camps. James' Principles of Psychology has always managed to draw the admiration of thinkers of different philosophical persuasions. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Edmund Husserl, for example, were both influenced by this work. In the case of the Principles of Psychology, one of the reasons for James' ability to draw the attention of diverse philosophical schools is his employment of two distinct methods of psychological research: (1) the method of introspection and (2) the experimental method. Because of this double strain, James attracted the attention of behaviorists like Dewey and Mead who warmly greeted his experimental method as well as the admiration of phenomenologists like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty who were greatly impressed by the rich and penetrating phenomenological descriptions gained by his introspective method. Dewey viewed James' dual methodology as constituting "two incompatible strains in the Jamesian psychology," and he noted that "the conflict between them is most marked in the case of the self."[7] This mixing of methodologies is surely no small factor in the growing number of disparate interpretations of the Jamesian self.

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[7]Dewey, op. cit., p. 598.

To this mass of interpretations I now add my own view of the Jamesian self. My interpretation has been assisted by the insights of James Edie,[8] Hans Linschoten,[9] John Wild[10] and Bruce Wilshire.[11] These scholars have each contributed important insights regarding the existential and phenomenological orientation of James' thought especially with regards to consciousness and embodiment. These commentators however, unlike myself, view the Jamesian self as totally objective. None argues as I do that the Jamesian self is a unique and irreducible temporal process that flows beyond the subjective-objective dichotomy. Furthermore, none of their treatments of the Jamesian self takes fully into account the whole of James' thought on the self. They have mainly focused upon James' treatment of the self in chapter ten of the Principles of Psychology. Although this is the main source for James' thought on the self, it should not serve as the sole source for understanding James' long and continuous struggle to grasp the meaning of personal existence.

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[8]James Edie, op. cit.

[9]Hans Linshoten, On the Way Toward a Phenomenological Psychology: The Psychology of William James (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1968).

[10]John Wild, The Radical Empiricism of William James, (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc. 1969).

[11]Bruce Wilshire, William James and Phenomenology: A Study of "The Principles of Psychology," (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

This study has two main objectives. First, it will be shown that there is present in James' writings a conception of the self which has not yet been fully explored by any Jamesian scholar. Second, it will be argued that this Jamesian account is one of the most thorough and honest accounts of that mysterious part of reality we call the self.

The Jamesian account of the self that will be presented and defended in this essay is not one that James fully developed or one that he unambiguously adhered to throughout his philosophical career. It is nonetheless the only consistent account of personal existence that can be constructed from all his valuable but loosely organized insights concerning consciousness and selfhood. It is also the one account of selfhood that is in agreement with the entire philosophical thrust of James' writings. In elucidating what James must have held given his explicit principles and insights, but did not always fully or clearly express, it will be necessary at times to amend and or further develop some features of James' account. Although some aspects of James' account are in need of supplementation, this supplementation is mainly a matter of extending and refining James' own principles and drawing out their interconnections and their necessary implications. Finally, this interpretation of the Jamesian self is the only one that leads to a wider, richer and more accurate portrayal of personal existence than is found in the traditional

alternative views.

It will be argued that there can be found in James' writings a development of a single unified theory of the self according to which the self is best described as Self-Constituting-Historical-Existence, and as such the self's existence entails the togetherness of a subjective and an objective dimension and their continuous interdependence. I say "can be found" because there is so much ambiguity and complexity in James' writings on the self that this theory is never clearly laid out nor totally developed by James. It will be shown that according to this theory, the self should be regarded as a subjective-objective temporal being, whose existence can be symbolized as follows: I⟸⟹ME. Here the "I" stands for the present subjective pulse of thought and the "ME" stands for that aggregate known as the objective self. The arrows represent the continuous mutual influence between these dimensions. It will be demonstrated that the Jamesian self is this process as a whole and that it is only within this process that there is found and "I" and a "ME". Evidence will be given to show that James' writings as a whole support this interpretation more than any other. Finally, an appraisal of the Jamesian theory will be offered in which it will be compared to four major alternative theories.

We will explore James' conception of the self in the following manner: First, James' reasons for rejecting the

traditional alternative theories will be analyzed to see what they suggest regarding James' positive doctrine of the self. Second, the main features of the Jamesian self will be outlined in the form of an initial rough sketch. Third, the objective dimension of the Jamesian self will be examined in detail. Fourth, the subjective dimension of the Jamesian self will be thoroughly investigated. Fifth, the full-self and the relationship of its two dimensions and the problem of self-identify will be discussed and sixth, the Jamesian theory of the self will be appraised by comparing it to four traditional alternative conceptions of the self with regard to its treatment of four fundamental experiential features of personal existence.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN PARTS OF THIS STUDY

In part two, James' critique of traditional theories of the self will be examined. This critique should provide us with important clues regarding the main outlines of the Jamesian self. I am proceeding in this manner because James is clearest about what he rejects. The often overlooked novelty of James' approach to the self is more readily apparent when one examines his treatment of the Spiritualists, Associationists, Transcendentalists and Behaviorists. His treatment of these four views points out the inadequacy of any interpretation of the Jamesian self which views James as a member of any of these four philosophical groups or interprets him in terms of categories borrowed from these systems of thought. Because of the complexity of James' theory of the self, and its special affinities with all of the above views, it is important to understand right from the start that James is breaking new ground here, and this is what we intend to establish in this section. The critique represents our first set of clues on the way to understanding the Jamesian self, and it must be held fast to if we are to avoid misinterpreting his more complex and ambiguous positive doctrine of the self. An understanding of James' reasons for rejecting these conceptions of the self should be helpful in clarifying the meaning of the Jamesian self. It should be kept in mind that this section is not concerned with demonstrating the real

inadequacy of these alternative theories of the self. The primary concern of this section is rather to explore exactly what James rejects and why he rejects it, so that we can use this information to clarify the meaning of the self he accepts.

In the third part of this study, we will present a rough sketch of the main features of the Jamesian self. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an initial understanding of the Jamesian view of personal existence that subsequent sections will analyze in greater detail. Here we will explain what is meant in claiming that the self has two dimensions and enjoys a unique way of being that I call, self-constituting-historical-existence.

In part four we will focus on James' treatment of the objective dimension of the self. Here our discussion shall concern the "ME" aspect of the self as opposed to the "I" aspect. To avoid misunderstanding here, it should be noted that our present separate treatment of the two dimensions of the self should not be taken as an indication that James believed that they existed separately. He did not. This section and the following section actually prepare the way for part six in which the self is shown to be an irreducible phenomenon involving the togetherness of its dimensions. The main concern of part four, however, will be the objective dimension of the self. Here we will investigate the three principal constituents of the empirical self (material,

social, and spiritual). We will discuss the unity of that aggregate which we all recognize as the empirical "ME". In this regard, James' views concerning the functions of the body and the role of care in the formation of a unified self will be carefully explored. In this section we will show that the objective self is neither a mere manifestation of a true hidden self nor is it exhaustive of that reality known as the self.

In part five the subjective dimension of the self will be explored. Here, we will focus on James' theory of consciousness with special attention devoted to its unity, temporality and activity. We will argue in this section that there actually exists for James an "I" dimension of the self, and that the subject of experience is far from vanishing (as Dewey claimed). It will also be argued that this subjective dimension of the self is primarily a process of caring.

The concrete full self will be the focus of attention in part six. Here the interdependence of the dimensions of the self will be discussed. This will involve exploring the historical character of the full self with emphasis upon both the spontaneity and the sedimentation of personal existence. Here "spontaneity" refers to the subject's active constitution of the "ME" in the present. Here "sedimentation" refers to the influence exerted by one's past objective selfhood on one's present subjectivity. Our aim in this section is to show that the Jamesian self is this

subjective-objective temporal process itself taken as an irreducible whole. The identity that this self enjoys will then be explored. Part seven will be devoted to a discussion of the merits of the Jamesian theory of the self. Here we will be comparing the Jamesian account of the self to four alternative views with regards to their treatment of four fundamental experiential features of personal existence. These features are: care, temporality, agency and sociality. We will also discuss certain objections that have or can be raised regarding the Jamesian self. The aim of this section is to show the superiority of the Jamesian theory in accounting for more of the experiential features of selfhood with a minimum of metaphysical assumptions.

At the end of this study, there will be a brief summary of our major findings as well as a discussion of the significance of our results for both the philosophical community and the world at large.

PART TWO

JAMES' CRITIQUE OF THE TRADITIONAL THEORIES OF THE SELF

In this part of the study we shall examine James' critique of traditional theories of the self. Our hope is that this will provide us with important clues regarding the main outlines of the Jamesian self. Here we shall be discussing James' treatment of the Spiritualists, Associationists, Transcendentalists and Behaviorists. Knowledge of the reasons why James rejects a self that is an automaton, or a bundle of perceptions, or an inactive soul or a transcendental ego is knowledge that should prove useful in clarifying the meaning of the Jamesian self. Our main goal in this section is not to argue for the real inadequacy of these alternative theories of the self. Our main concern here is rather to explore exactly what James rejects and why he rejects it, so that we can use this information to clarify the meaning of the self he accepts. We are taking this approach because James is more clear about what he rejects than what he embraces. This part of the essay will point out the inadequacy of any treatment of the Jamesian self which equates it with any of the above four philosophical approaches to personal existence.

A. THE CRITIQUE OF THE SPIRITUALISTS

James says at one point that the soul theory seems to offer the line of least logical resistance in our efforts to account for the experience of selfhood. The Spiritualist's explanation is ultimately rejected by James, when he finds it to be an unnecessary hypothesis to account for the experienced continuity of the stream of consciousness. James sees no need to suppose any other agent than a succession of perishing thoughts which have the power of appropriation with regard to the past thoughts. The soul is not only unexperiencable; it is superfluous. James regarded the soul as a scientifically worthless concept because it does nothing to explain psychological phenomena. The term "soul" was for James nothing but a "theoretic stop-gap." The term simply creates a place and reserves it for "a future explanation to occupy."[12] This "future explanation" is what this study is all about.

James had little faith in the use of unexperienced entities to account for our personal existence. He clearly saw the major weakness of the Scholastic theory of the soul which dates back to Plato and Aristotle. To state that my stream of experience inheres in an unexperienced substance is according to James telling me nothing new about this stream.

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[12]William James, A Pluralistic Universe ed. F. Burkhardt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 95.

From this notion of inherence, what can we deduce? James feels that the spiritualists' account provides us with nothing but the same stream repeating itself with a mysterious transcendental support.

The principal reason for James' dissatisfaction with the substantial soul hypothesis is that it guaranteed for the subject a greater degree of unity than the facts of personal existence support. James was familiar with numerous cases of mental breakdown and multiple personalities which suggested to him that there was a passing principle of unity working itself out, with perhaps various degrees of success and failure throughout one's life. Our "experienced identity" in life does not testify to the absolute unity that has been talked of since the time of Plato. James felt that such conceptions of human identity go beyond the available evidence.

James is aware of the major arguments for the existence of the soul but he finds them all weak and inconclusive. One of the main arguments for the existence of the soul has been that the material brain cannot be the agent of thought which is immaterial and which is capable of taking cognizance of immaterial objects. James agrees that the great difficulty is in understanding how a thing can cognize anything. He adds, however, "This difficulty is not in the least removed by giving to the thing that cognizes the name of soul."[13]

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[13] Principles, I, p. 328.

James does not believe one must adopt a materialistic conception of mind if one rejects the soul. In James' theory the subject of experience is neither the soul nor the brain; it is the present perishing pulse of thought. "Even if the brain could not cognize universals, immaterials or it 'self'" says James "still the "Thought" which we have relied upon in our account is not the brain, closely as it seems connected with it."[14] The "I" of experience is a remembering and appropriating Thought incessantly renewed.

One of the sources for the popularity of the soul theory is the wish for immortality. The Christian concept of judgment and punishment after death lends support to the soul theory. James finds little merit in these practical reasons for believing in the soul's existence. For James the only immortality that would be worthy of the name is one that would involve a consciousness continuous with what we have experienced in this life. An imperishable simple soul substance does not guarantee this. Here James supports Locke's view that the mere survival of one's soul substance is not equivalent to the survival of one's self which is what we normally mean by immortality. By itself the concept of the soul does not provide the type of immortality that we cherish.

Although James rejects the notion of a substantial soul, he does not hesitate to use the term soul in some of his

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[14] Ibid., I, p. 328.

works. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, he speaks of the soul frequently. James is not really being inconsistent here. It must be admitted, however, that James employs the term soul in a loosely descriptive manner that tends to solicit charges that he is betraying his position adopted in the Principles of Psychology. Phrases like "attitudes in the soul" and "the sick soul" seem to suggest a belief in a substantial soul. The truth is, however, that James purposely leaves vague the meaning of the term "soul" in The Varieties of Religious Experience and insists upon no specific understanding of the term. He even formally warns the reader of this fact. "When I say 'Soul'," writes James, "you need not take me in the ontological sense unless you prefer to."[15] James is actually adopting here the same attitude towards the soul that he took earlier in the Principles of Psychology which is that the soul can be a viable option only to a believer through an act of faith alone. There James wrote, "If I ever use it [the term soul] it will be in the vaguest and most popular way. The reader who finds any comfort in the idea of the soul, is however, perfectly free to continue to believe in it...."[16] Had these warnings of James been heeded, he would not have been viewed by some critics as vacillating with regards to the soul.

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[15]William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902, New York, Modern Library, 1936), p. 192.

[16]Principles, I, p. 332.

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CRITIQUE

What clues can be gathered from this critique regarding James positive doctrine of the self? James critique of the Spiritualist's position suggest the following points:

(1) The self is something which is totally experienceable.

(2) The self is something which is dynamic and mutable.

(3) The self is not a spiritual substance. (4) The self is not that physical mass called the brain. (5) The self is perhaps perishable.

B. THE CRITIQUE OF THE ASSOCIATIONISTS

James felt that it was their atomistic assumptions regarding experience that made it impossible for the Associationists to develop a viable theory of the self. James accuses Hume and his followers of not being genuine empiricists. A genuine empiricists, James feels, describes the phenomena just as they appear. If the Associationists had done this, they would have realized that our experience is not of atomistic pure sensations, but always of things that are fringed by all sorts of relationships. Having chopped up experience into a chain of distinct existences, Hume tried in vain to account for our experience of personal identity. Fully aware of his own failure here, Hume confessed in the appendix of his Treatise of Human Nature "...this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it insuperable. Others, perhaps... may discover some hypothesis that will reconcile these contradictions."[17]

Hume's failure to provide an adequate account of self identity stems from the fact that he was unable to reconcile or renounce the following theories: (1) All our distinct perceptions are distinct existences and (2) the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences. The

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[17] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Selby Rigge Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 635-636.

Associationist's view fails because it refuses to accept either the unification of ideas in the conscious field or the immanence of the recent past in the present. James, however, accepts both and continues from there.

Although James applauded Hume's rejection of the soul substance, he did not look favorably upon Hume's view of consciousness as a succession of unitary ideas with no real relationship to each other. James feels that Hume failed to see that there is something other than the two extreme alternatives of pure unity and pure separateness. He points out that Hume was as equally extreme as the spiritualists that he rejected. James writes,

> As they say the Self is nothing but Unity, unity abstract and absolute, so Hume says it is nothing but Diversity, diversity abstract and absolute; whereas in truth it is that mixture of unity and diversity which we ourselves have already found so easy to pick apart.[18]

For James the unity of the parts of the stream is just as "real" a connection as their diversity is a real separation; both connection and separation are ways in which the past thoughts appear to the present thought. In looking for more than this, in seeking an impression that remains always present and invariably the same, Hume revealed that he too had not freed himself from that "Absolutism which is the great disease of philosophic Thought."[19] The real tie that

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[18] Ibid., I, p. 333.

[19] Ibid., I, p. 334.

Hume sought in the train of perceptions, but couldn't find, James found realized in the present appropriating pulse of thought.

James points out that followers of Hume such as John Mill tend to avoid confronting the problem of how consciousness comes to be aware of itself if it is only a train of independent thoughts. "As a rule," says James, "Associationists writers keep talking about 'the mind' and about what 'we' do; and so, smuggling in surreptitiously what they ought avowedly to have postulated in the form of a present judging Thought, they either trade upon their reader's lack of discernment or are undiscerning themselves."[20]

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[20] Ibid., I, p. 336.

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CRITIQUE

What does James' critique of the Associationists suggest regarding his own positive doctrine of the self? It shows first of all that James himself is not in the same camp with Hume with regards to the self. This is an important point for a number of interpreters of James have failed to notice the difference between Hume's chain of unrelated ideas and James' stream of appropriating Thoughts. James' pulses of Thought are active forces while Hume's ideas are simply inert contents. James' pulses of subjectivity unite through continuous appropriation to form a single stream while Hume's ideas are incapable of uniting. It is indeed true that James too speaks of a chain of Thoughts, but this is in no way equivalent to Hume's chain of ideas. With Hume there is nothing that makes these ideas a real chain, while with James the present active pulse of consciousness with its act of appropriation makes possible the continuous existence of the chain which is more aptly described as a stream. "My present Thought," writes James, "stands thus in the plenitude of ownership not only *de facto*, but *de jure*, the most real owner there can be, an all without the supposition of any 'inexplicable tie' but in a perfectly verifiable and phenomenal way."[21]

In addition to the above, the critique of the

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[21] Principles, I, p. 341.

Associationists indicates: (1) the Jamesian self is not a fiction or a mere logical construction or simply the pronoun "I", (2) the Jamesian self is mutable, and (3) the Jamesian self is an active force in the world.

C. THE CRITIQUE OF THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

The Transcendentalist's view of the self was strongly attacked by James. He regarded Kant's account of the transcendental ego as "ineffectual and windy."[22] James rejected the Kantian account for he saw no value in empty constructs that are not tied to any concrete, empirical manifestations. Furthermore, Kant's ego was simply not active enough for James. James notes that unlike the soul, the transcendental ego does not intend, select or judge for its function is a purely logical one of maintaining that there is an "I" which is regarded as a transcendental condition for the possibility of experience. James views the Kantian ego as a barren form of consciousness with no properties so that we cannot tell "whether it be substantial, nor whether it be immaterial, nor whether it be simple, nor whether it be permanent."[23] It has no properties; nothing flows from it and so James calls it "simply nothing."[24]

James points out that even if Kant's belief in the original chaotic manifold were correct, the process of synthesis is not the least bit explained by claiming it is the work of the transcendental ego. James writes,

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[22] Ibid., I, p. 345.

[23] Ibid., I, p. 343.

[24] Ibid., I, p. 345.

> Phrase it as one may, the difficulty is always the same: the Many known by the One. Or does one seriously think he understands better how the knower "connects" its objects when one calls the former a transcendental Ego and the latter a 'Manifold of Intuition' than when one calls them Thought and Things respectively?[25]

James adds that the best vehicle of knowing and the best grammatical subject for the verb "know" would be one, if possible, from whose other properties the knowing could be deduced, and if such a subject couldn't be found "the best one would be that with the fewest ambiguities and the least pretentious name."[26] Given such guidelines, Kant's transcendental ego is a rather weak candidate for the title of "the vehicle of knowing."

James points out that if one views the transcendental ego as an agent and not simply as an a priori form of consciousness, transcendentalism "is only Substantialism grown shame-faced, and the Ego only a 'cheap and nasty' edition of the soul."[27] In this case, all the arguments James gave for rejecting the Spiritualist's position would apply with equal force to the Transcendentalists' account of the self. The connection of things in our knowledge is not explained by making it the deed of an agent whose essence is

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[25] Ibid., I, p. 344.

[26] Ibid., I, p. 344.

[27] Ibid., I, p. 345.

self-identity and who transcends time. James feels that the agency of phenomenal thought coming and going in time is just as easy to understand. He regards the present pulse of thought which is an event in time as the only thinker which the facts require. There is simply no need for Kant's extraempirical and preexisting subject and its categorical equipment.

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CRITIQUE

What can we gather regarding James' conception of the self from his criticism of Kant? There are, I believe, three clues present here regarding James' positive doctrine of the self. (1) The self is primarily an agent in the world and not simply the source of the unity of consciousness. (2) The self exists totally in time. (3) The self is an empirical reality.

D. THE CRITIQUE OF THE BEHAVIORISTS

Behavioristic interpretations of the self are quite popular today. This approach to the self is not, however, a new phenomenon. In 1879 James published an article entitled "Are We Automata?" In it James launched a strong attack against certain behaviorist of his day who believed man was a automaton. According to the "automaton theory," consciousness is a simple epiphenomenal accompaniment of the neural processes whose course is strictly determined by the laws of the physical world. This was not the last attack launched by James against the behaviorists of his day. He continued to criticize materialistic conceptions of personal existence throughout his philosophical career. Despite this fact, there are some behaviorists who insist on reading behavioristic implications into his own thought and claiming him as one of their own. It will be shown here why this is a misinterpretation of James. James' criticism of the behavioristic approach to the self should also prove useful in clarifying the meaning of James' positive doctrine of the self.

One of the objections that James had against a materialistic conception of the self was that it seemed to conflict with Darwin's theory of evolution, a theory which the behaviorists themselves claimed to support. James argues that the proponents of the automaton theory can not account

for consciousness' superfluous and logically unjustifiable presence if it simply accompanies the real work of the brain and the nervous system. James also notes with regards to evolution that the Automaton Theory can not explain why the efficiency of the reaction of the organism increases with decreasing automatization. If the Behaviorist's account is the correct one, the opposite of this should be the case in the evolution of life forms. James argues here that increasing instability of the reaction of the organism would be the natural consequence of the growing complexity of the nervous system where no set response is associated with any external stimulus. In the highly complex human world for example the stimulus is never exactly repeated. Since automatized association is the sole explanation accepted by the behaviorists, they are in no position to account for the fact that in evolutionary terms the efficiency of the reaction of the organism increases in spite of its decreasing automatization of fixed responses to the environment.

Another reason James offers for rejecting the behaviorist account of the self has to do with the phenomena of pain and pleasure. There exist enormous correlations, statistically speaking, between pleasure and action beneficial to the human self and also between pain and action harmful to the human self. These correlations cannot be accounted for by behaviorists who deny psycho-physical interaction. James writes,

> But if pleasure and pains have no efficacity one does not see (without such a priori rational harmony as would be scouted by the "scientific" champions of the Automaton Theory) why the most noxious acts, such as burning, might not give a thrill of delight, and the most necessary ones, such as breathing, cause agony.[28]

A third reason given by James for not adopting a behavioristic view of the self is one's own experience of activity and feeling of effort. In an article titled "The Feeling of Effort" James states,

> There is a feeling of mental spontaneity, opposed in nature to all afferent feelings; but it does not, like the pretended feeling of muscular innervation, sit among them as among its peers. It is something which dominates them all, by simply choosing from their midst.[29]

According to the supporters of the Automaton Theory, the feeling of activity and hesitation are like any other feelings lacking efficacy and thus involve no biological advantage which could be preserved by natural selection. Yet, as in the case of pain and pleasure the particular distribution of feelings of activity remains an utterly unaccountable coincidence for these behaviorists. They are not able to explain why it is that consciousness of activity decreases in direct proportion as automatization of the

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[28] Ibid., I, p. 146.

[29] James, "The Feeling of Effort," in Collected Essays and Reviews (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), p. 204.

response increases and vice versa. Anyone who has had to make an important decision knows how agonizingly intense consciousness becomes as indecision grows. Why is there this correlation if man is an automaton? According to James these correlations like those spoken of earlier all point to the same conclusion and that is that we are not automata.

In addition to the three reasons discussed above, James also rejected a behavioristic conception of the self on pragmatic grounds. In a 1908 article for "The Philosophical Review" James showed the unsatisfactory character of the behaviorist view of the self by employing the ficticious idea of an "automatic sweetheart." Here James argues convincingly that a robot sweetheart completely identical to a real maiden except lacking in consciousness would not be a satisfactory sweetheart for any person. James points out that even if the robot behaved in all ways like the perfect mistress, she would not do as a sweetheart. "It" would not do, for in the case of the "sweetheart" outward treatment is valued primarily as an expression of the accompanying consciousness believed in. "Pragmatically, then, belief in the automatic sweetheart would not work," says James, "and in point of fact no one treats it as a serious hypothesis."[30] Here James is emphasizing the fact that the belief or denial of an efficacious consciousness really leads to different practical and emotional attitudes. It does make a difference

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[30] James, The Meaning of Truth, ed. Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 103n.

whether I am viewed as a spontaneous and conscious being or as a machine. Some followers of Descartes enjoyed torturing animals in order to prove that they took the denial of consciousness in animals seriously. James realizes that the denial of an efficacious consciousness in man could lead to even more dreadful consequences. Although the pragmatic argument offered here does not directly deal with the validity of the automaton theory, it does illustrate the absurd and perhaps dangerous consequences that would follow if it was regarded by the world as a serious hypothesis.

Nonetheless, James was also aware of the difficulties of the interactionist view. In the Principles of Psychology he admits that we can form no positive image of the way in which a thought may affect the material brain. He regarded this issue as "...the ultimate of ultimate problems...."[31] He noted, however, that since the time of Hume the concept of causation itself has been subject to critique, so that it is inconsistent to dogmatically deny mental causation while holding for physical causality. He writes, "As in the night all cats are gray so in the darkness of metaphysical criticism all causes are obscure."[32] Although he recognized the obscurity surrounding the notion of mental causation, he still believed that the evidence against the automaton theory was very strong. In the Principles of Psychology he finally comes to state,

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[31]James, Principles, I, p. 177.

[32]Ibid., I, p. 178.

> The conclusion that it (i.e. consciousness) is useful is, after all this, quite justifiable. But, if it is useful, it must be so through its causal efficaciousness. I, at any rate (pending metaphysical reconstruction not yet successfully achieved), shall have no hesitation in using the language of common-sense throughout this book.[33]

In his last works, a Pluralistic Universe and Some problems of Philosophy, James was even less hesitant about embracing the interactionist view. Here our efforts and activities are taken at their face value and accepted as genuine ingredients of the real world, a world that involves the continuous emergence of novelty which the automaton theory so completely ignored.

Despite all the arguments that James put forth against the mechanistic view of the self there are still some interpreters of James who feel he really affirmed only a "behavioral self." John Dewey, for example, has argued that the "behavioral self" is the only self which James intended to maintain.[34] Dewey's position was motivated in part by James' loose and unguarded expressions in an article titled "Does Consciousness Exist?" This article does not really deny consciousness as some behaviorists believe but rather maintains the inseparability of consciousness from its content. In other words, it simply declares that there is no transcendental entity lurking behind concrete mental states.

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[33] Ibid., I, p. 147.

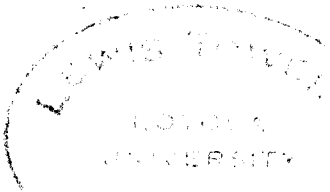
[34] Dewey, op. cit.

This is quite different from the behavioristic denial of the concrete mental states themselves. What should not be forgotten is that not long after this rather ambiguous article James declared in A Pluralistic Universe the reality of the full self grounded in the dynamic solidarity of concrete mental states.

It was probably James' emphasis upon the body in his theory of the self that motivated some to view him as a behaviorist. No one realized the break-through that he had achieved. The body that James emphasized was not the materialistic body of physiology but the body which Phenomenology later called the lived-body.

It should also be noted that James' famous theory of the emotions which contained behavioristic aspects probably motivated some to interpret his theory of the self as behavioristic. If one examines James' theory of the emotions carefully, however, he will discover that it does not entail a behavioristic conception of the self for it doesn't deny consciousness or its activity, rather it simply insists that emotions involve a bodily component. In other words, the physical expression of certain emotions is a necessary part of our experience of those emotions, i.e., but for the body these emotions would not be.

In this matter Robert Ehman and I are in agreement. In his article on James' theory of the self Ehman states,



> There is perhaps nothing in James that has been more radically misinterpreted than his account at this point, and he has often been taken as a mere materialist. However, there is in fact no materialism here, no denial of thought or emotion, but simply the observation that we are unable to grasp these as purely psychical, as nonbodily. For James, the acts of thought and feeling are felt as bodily acts; and the body is felt as a vehicle of consciousness. When James asserts that the 'acts of attending, assenting, negating are felt as movements in the head,' the term "as" ought to be taken literally.[35]

The main thrust of James' entire philosophical thought points in the opposite direction of behaviorism, and if he were writing today, its direction would remain unchanged. In today's society people who experience themselves as automatons are regarded as in need of psychiatric care. Why don't we also regard theories that seek to describe persons as automatons as pathological? According to James, the experience of oneself as a person is primary and prior to any scientific difficulties regarding how such an experience is possible or how it is to be explained. In this regard, James would agree with R. D. Laing that the theory of man as a person "loses its way if it falls into an account of man as a machine or man as an organismic system of it-processes."[36]

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[35]Robert R. Ehman, "William James and the Structure of the Self," New Essays in Phenomenology, ed. J. Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 262.

[36]R. D. Laing, The Divided Self, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 23.

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CRITIQUE

What does James' critique of the Behaviorists suggest regarding his positive doctrine of the self? It indicates at least four points regarding the Jamesian self: (1) Despite James' rejection of the soul substance, the self is not to be equated with the physical body. (2) The self involves a consciousness which is efficacious. (3) The self is a source of novelty. (4) A theory of the self should not ignore how this notion functions in one's everyday life and the concrete value it carries there.

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALL FOUR CRITIQUES

Let us now summarize what James' criticism of alternative theories indicates concerning the type of self he would accept. As a whole, all four critiques point to a Jamesian self that is: (1) active and efficacious, (2) within time, hence historical, (3) not exclusively material but involving concrete mental states or pulses of thought, (4) changing, never absolutely identical with what it was and, (5) experiencable but perhaps not all at once for it may be like Husserl's physical object revealing itself only perspectively.

In our pursuit of the meaning of the Jamesian self, we will keep in mind these five clues. They should prove helpful in removing some of the ambiguity surrounding his positive statements concerning the self. On those occasions where James' loose statements invite varying interpretations of his positive doctrine of the self, I believe we should keep in mind what he has already clearly rejected and why he has rejected it. We will be referring to points made in this section as our argument unfolds for a particular interpretation of the Jamesian self.

PART THREE

THE JAMESIAN SELF: AN INITIAL SKETCH

There is present in the writings of William James a unique conception of the self. According to this theory the self enjoys a special way of being that is quite different from that of a "thing" and is perhaps best described as self-constituting-historical-existence. In this part of our study our aim is to offer the reader a rough outline of the Jamesian self which we will be analyzing and arguing for in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this essay.

What makes the being of the self so special, so different from that of a thing? This whole study is devoted to answering this question. But one should note immediately that unlike any "thing" the self has both an objective and a subjective dimension. It is this fact that the Jamesian theory of the self fully respects.

In the Principles of Psychology, James summarizes his findings on the self in the following way:

> We may sum up by saying that personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, an objective person, known by a passing subjective Thought and recognized as continuing in time. Hereafter, let us use the words ME and I for the empirical person and the judging Thought.[37]

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[37] Principles, I, p. 350.

The exact meaning of this statement and others like it lies at the very heart of this essay. When James says that personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, there ought to be no doubt that he is claiming that both elements are essential constituents of the self. A self is never merely an empirical person (ME), and it is also never merely a judging thought (I). A self is neither of these elements for it is both at once. This is what James means when he says that personality implies "the incessant presence" of not one but "two elements." The self is being described here by James as an ambiguous being, one that is simultaneously both subjective and objective. This is the feature of the Jamesian self that his commentators have for the most part ignored or misinterpreted.

James Edie, for example, takes the position that James developed a non-egological theory of consciousness according to which a distinction is made between consciousness (viewed as the non-personal condition of all objectification) and the self (viewed as merely a priviledged object of consciousness).[38] Bruce Wilshire shares Edie's view here.

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[38]James Edie, "The Genesis of a Phenomenological Theory of the Experience of Personal Identity: William James of Consciousness and the Self," Man and World, 6, pp. 322-338, (Summer, 1973).

Wilshire writes, "Rather he [James] has begun a reinterpretation of consciousness: we are not to speak of consciousness, but instead of 'sciousness', because all that is given is Object, or things just as they are known, and not thought itself."[39] Although Jamesian statements can certainly be gathered in support of this interpretation, it must be regarded as a basic misinterpretation of James' position on the self. Far from not talking about consciousness, James talks of a personal, efficacious consciousness repeatedly in the Principles and throughout nearly all his philosophical works. If one listens carefully to what he does "speak of," it is clear that he regards consciousness as being personal and a felt dimension of the self which is simultaneously and irreducibly both objective and subjective, both an individual and an agent, both known and knower. The textual evidence for this interpretation will be given in the subsequent pages of this study. It should be noted now, however, that James offers us a non-egological theory of consciousness only in the sense that there is no permanent ego behind or above the concrete stream of consciousness which supports it and serves to unify it. This view does not mean that James believes that consciousness is an anonymous function or that the self does

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[39]Wilshire, op. cit., p. 136.

not include consciousness. It means rather that the Jamesian self is a subjective-objective process constituted in and with the flux of the stream of experience.

Patrick Dooley is in agreement with me concerning James' position on the artificial separation of self and subjectivity. Dooley seems to recognize the fact that chapter nine of the Principles which deals with the stream of thought is just as important to an understanding of the Jamesian self as the chapter which follows it that is devoted exclusively to the self. Dooley writes,

> For James, it makes no sense to talk of thoughts or experiences apart from the self; experiences and thoughts are only personal. Since the states of consciousness we study are parts of personal selves, our discussion of the first characteristic of the stream of consciousness becomes a discussion of James' theory of the self.[40]

The quotation cited on page 37 is not the only place where James depicts the self as a subjective-objective process. Such descriptions are found throughout his writings. He also begins his account in Psychology, Briefer Course, by stating:

> Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of myself, of my personal existence. At the same time it is I who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects

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[40]Patrick K. Dooley, Pragmatism as Humanism: The Philosophy of William James (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1974), p. 28.

> discriminated in it, of which for shortness we may call one the Me and the other the I.[41]

What James here refers to as aspects of the self, I call dimensions of the self. The self has both a subjective dimension and a objective dimension and these dimensions are interdependent. The self is strictly speaking neither of its dimensions but always both at once. In other words the self is this total process as an irreducible whole. This is why James refers to the "Me" and the "I" as "aspects" of the self. The self is a unique form of being in that it has both a subjective aspect and a objective aspect. This is reflected in the fact that the self unlike anything else in experience is both the "knower" and the "known."

The claim that the self is both subjective and objective may appear unusual and puzzling and yet is not the self exactly that, unusual and puzzling? Is not the self really quite unique among all of the objects that occupy our thought? It may be that a faithful description of the essential uniqueness of the self leads to a recognition of its ambiguous nature, that it is in fact a subjective-objective being, that it truly is subjectivity incarnate.

There is a natural tendency among both philosophers and psychologists to reduce the self to the status of a mere object. Since our experience deals almost exclusively with objects, it is only natural to approach our own existence as if it too was purely objective. Even those who recognize the

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[41]William James, Psychology, The Briefer Course, 1892. 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1895), p. 176.

reality of consciousness tend to continue to treat the self as if it was no different from any other object in experience. The following example is given in order to clarify the mistake that occurs when the self is viewed as a purely objective being. Imagine two traffic light poles standing at opposite corners of a busy intersection. A basic description of one of these traffic light poles may be said to apply equally to the other. Now imagine that one of these is miraculously given the gift of consciousness so that it is aware of itself and its surroundings. Now can we still claim that a basic description of one of these traffic light poles applies equally to the other? Can we take the position that there now exists only a minor difference between the two poles and that this difference can be described in the following manner: One traffic light pole is now aware of itself as a traffic light pole while the other is not? Such a view is, of course, a monumental understatement of the transformation that has occurred at this intersection. It is a misunderstanding stemming from the belief that self-awareness is an extrinsic feature that does not affect the essential nature of what the awareness is of. This fact tends to be ignored in theories of the self. James realizes, however, that awareness including self-awareness must be regarded as an essential part of the being that is aware. The self is a great deal more than its objective manifestations in experience; just as, our one traffic light

pole is now a great deal more than its neighboring traffic light pole. The point we are emphasizing here is this: subjectivity itself is also a dimension of the self and is not simply the means by which the self is grasped. The Jamesian theory of self takes this fact fully into account.

But even if awareness, including self-awareness, could be regarded as a nonessential trait, we must remember that for James consciousness is a great deal more than simple awareness. For James, consciousness is primarily a selective force. It is because of this teleological character of consciousness that James places consciousness at the core of the self rather than treats it as the means by which we become aware of a separate entity called the self. Concerning this point Ellwood Johnson comments, "The expression 'stream of impulsive thought' is the closest James came to a solid definition of the human self. There is, inherent in this expression, the principle that 'will is identity.' Whatever it is in consciousness that focuses, selects, attends is the individuality of the person."[42]

What does it mean to claim that the self is not totally and purely objective? It means, among other things, that no particular object is in and of itself necessarily a self or a part of a particular self. A body viewed as a physiological

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[42]Ellwood Johnson, "William James and the Art of Fiction," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 30 (Spring 1972), p. 286.

mass is not even intrinsically a part of a self. If a body is regarded as a part of a particular self, it is because there is present a consciousness that cares for it. We do not care for our bodies because we identify ourselves with them, rather we identify ourselves with them because we care for them. Thus, even the core of one's objective self is constituted as such by a caring attitude of the present pulse of subjective thought. It is care which personalizes all the elements that constitute the self.

To deny that one's body is in and of itself personalized does seem strange. One is tempted to reply, "If I am anything, I am my body." One is also tempted to view James' position here as being Platonic. This last temptation should be avoided, however, for James is not denying that the body comes to form a part of the self or that a self is always an embodied self. James is simply claiming that a living body per se does not constitute a self, that more is required for a self than the existence of a body. In the case of severe brain damage, for example, a body may be kept alive by our modern, marvelous medical machines for days after its personhood had vanished forever. The body does have a central and vital role to play in the Jamesian theory of the self, but this physiological mass is nonetheless not intrinsically personal. It is care which personalizes the body, and it is this subjectivized-body which comes to form the core of the self.

That no particular object is intrinsically personalized stems from the fact that the self is not purely objective nor purely subjective. The "I" and the "Me" are only dimensions of the self and exist as an "I" and a "Me" only within that whole subjective-objective temporal process which is the self. The present pulse of thought is an "I," i.e. is personalized, only because it cares for and takes a peculiar interest in certain of its ojects which thereby becomes its "Me." If this did not occur, it would simply be a present pulse of anonymous experiencing or what James refers to as pure experience. Pure experience is something we can't really conceive for being selves we are only familiar with ordinary experience which always tends to be personal. The objects which come to form one's "Me" are also non-personalized until they are cared for by the present pulse of subjectivity. In short, an "I" and a "Me" can only exist in union, that is, only within the subjective-objective temporal process which is the self. The "I" and the "Me" are dimensions of the self and can have no existence apart from that irreducible whole which is the self. The "I" and the "Me" can be regarded as abstractions in the sense that they <u>are</u> insofar as they are in union.

The relationship that exists between the dimensions of the self is not unlike that relationship that exists between space and time in Einstein's Relativity Theory. According to Einstein, neither space nor time can exist without the other.

Our experience is always of space-time. It is impossible, says Einstein, to conceive of space except against the background of time and in terms of it and vice versa. There really exists neither space nor time, but only space-time. One might also say that there exists neither an "I" nor a "Me," but only "I"$\leftrightharpoons$"ME" according to James.

"I"$\leftrightharpoons$"ME" is a kind of shorthand that is meant to indicate the process which is the self. Personal existence is more complex than even this formula suggests but for the time being it can serve as a rough representation of the dynamic nature of that irreducible totality known as the self. The being which this formula is meant to symbolize we shall call <u>self-constituting-historical-existence.</u> This name has been chosen because it emphasizes certain essential features of selfhood. The self helps to determine its own mode of existence and is thus to a certain extent <u>self-constituting.</u> The word helps here is meant to indicate that the self is also formed under the influences of the situation within which it acts. The self is <u>historical</u> in the sense that it has an accumulative existence for it always brings a past to bear on a present. Of course this past is always an interpreted past, i.e., a past seen from the perspective of the present pulse of subjectivity. The term <u>existence</u> refers to the fact that the self does not have the being of a thing. A thing simply is or as Heidegger would say, it is merely "present-at-hand" or "ready-to-hand." This is not so in the case of the self, for it stretches

itself out through time by projecting its future in the present in light of its past, and this is what we mean here by the term existence. To emphasize all these essential traits of its being, I have labeled the Jamesian self, self-constituting-historical-existence.

In an article titled "A Jamesian Theory of Self," James Bayley made the following observation concerning the constitution of the self: "More than half a century before Sartre claimed that human existence precedes human essence, James argued that the self is a human creation whose nature can be uncovered only by examination of human action. The self is what it is known as, or found to be, in practice."[43] Unfortunately after this excellent start Bayley then proceeds to give a behavioristic reinterpretation of the Jamesian self along similar lines begun by Dewey in his, "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James."[44] It is puzzling to see this kind of comparison to Sartre followed by the comment, "'Selfing' is something an organism does, just as are breathing and digesting. The self, for James, is a doing, not a being." It will become clear in the subsequent pages of this study that the self is truly self-constituting and not merely a "human creation" in the sense that it is an organism's adaptation to its environment.

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[43]James E. Bayley, "A Jamesian Theory of Self" Transactions of the Charles Peirce Society, Vol. 12 (Spring 1976), p. 149.

[44]Dewey, op. cit.

We will now take a brief look at each of the dimensions of the self. We will cover both dimensions in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Our present aim is to provide the reader with an initial rough sketch of the Jamesian self before commencing our detailed analysis and argumentation in the following sections.

The objective dimension of the self is the sum total of objects for which a particular consciousness has a special caring interest. These objects become personalized through care. Theoretically, any object can become part of one's objective self by creating excitement of an unusual kind in the stream of consciousness. There is, however, great agreement among people regarding the kinds of objects that do in fact enter the field of the personal.

The objective dimension of the self can be divided into three main areas: the material me, the social me, and the spiritual me. The material me is composed of all those physical objects towards which consciousness takes a special caring attitude. The physical body tends to form the nucleus of the material me. The social me includes all of those images that we believe others carry of us. Much more than "sticks and stones," names can hurt because of this social character of the self. There is finally the spiritual me which actually is not spiritual at all, but is rather one's own concrete acts of consciousness taken reflexively as objects. These three "me"s together form the objective

dimension of the self. The body, according to James, is not only the central factor in the material me, it lies at the core of the whole objective self and serves as its dominant source of unity. James discovers in fact, that every object that makes up the objective dimension of the self is related in some way to that priviledged object called the body. Although the objective dimension may be analyzed into three "me"s, a self is never purely material or purely social or purely spriritual. A self is always material, social, and spiritual all at once. We shall examine the objective dimension more fully later on, but let us now take an equally brief glance at the subjective dimension of the self.

The present passing pulse of thought is the subjective dimension of the self. It is the present caring and acting part of the self. It is also the self as knower as opposed to the self as known. According to James, the title of "I" is passed along by each perishing pulse of thought to its successor. This appropriation by each pulse of thought of its predecessor makes possible the continuity of the subjective dimension and the self as a whole. There is no absolute identity in the subject. There is, however, an ideal or functional identity established in the subjective dimension, in that each present pulse of thought carries the title of "I" and functions as an enduring ego. James describes this view by borrowing an illustration from Kant.

> Each thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realized as its Self to its own later proprietor. As Kant says, it is as if elastic balls were to have not only motion but knowledge of it, and a first ball were to transmit both its motion and its consciousness to a second, which took both up into its consciousness and passed them to a third, until the last ball held all that the other balls had held, and realized it as its own.[45]

The nature of this mysterious act of appropriation will be examined more fully later on. The point we want to make clear here is that for James, the subjective dimension of the self is not a body, or a soul, or a transcendental ego, but is rather the perishing present pulse of thought itself. It should be noted early that one should not let the temporary character of acts of consciousness blind one to the crucial functions they perform. A comparison with our present view of matter might help here. In the area of nuclear physics, it is held that there are subatomic particles that exist for only a small fraction of a second and these temporary entities are viewed as vital to the very existence of matter. Why may not the same situation prevail in the mental world? The exaggerated importance of permanence has been the plague of Western Philosophical Thought. This is perhaps no more evident than in its treatment of the self. We have a direct acquaintance with our temporary pulses of thought. Perhaps we ought to make sure that these fleeting realities

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[45] Principles, I, p. 322.

can't do the job before we start attributing the work to unexperienced entities. James feels they can do the job. Later, we will explore more fully how the present pulse of thought functions as the subjective dimension of the self. Let us now return to our discussion of the whole self.

The concrete full self involves both of the dimensions described above. The self exists as the whole irreducible subjective-objective temporal process. Like most of us, James uses the term self in various ways, sometimes to designate parts of the self and sometimes the whole of the self. Despite this, James makes it clear often enough that the only real self is the whole self, i.e., this subjective-objective existence taken as an irreducible whole.

The dimensions of the self are interdependent, i.e., they have a relationship which is reciprocal. The present pulse of subjectivity in caring for certain objects constitutes the "Me." We will let "I"$\longrightarrow$"ME" symbolize this phase of the process. This constitution of the "Me" does not occur in a vacuum. There are many forces influencing the creation and conservation of one's objective self. One of the major influences here is one's past constituted "Me"s. The past constituted "Me"s having been appropriated by the present "I," exert an influence on the "I"'s present constitution of the "Me." This influence is mainly on a subliminal level and "I"$\longleftarrow$"Me" symbolizes this phase of the process. Thus, we have a single continuous process that can

be roughly represented by the formula "I"⟷"Me." I say roughly represented because the process is in actuality even more complicated than this formula suggest. Until we discuss the whole process in detail, however, this formula "I"⟷"ME" can serve as a kind of shorthand for the dynamic relationship which exist between the dimensions of the self. The ingredients of each of the dimensions are changing, but the relationship between the dimensions remains constant. The objects that compose the "ME" are fluctuating, and the stream of thought itself is a constant flux. Amidst this change, the self continues to exist and remain relatively stable as a rainbow persists with a certain stability through the flux of sunshine and rain. But unlike a rainbow the self is not an illusion. On the contrary it is the reality that we are closest to and the one reality in terms of which all other things are judged to be real or unreal. We call this dynamic process, which each of is, self-constituting-historical-existence for this title does not simplify or overlook the vague and ambiguous nature of our existence.

Such a view of the self does not provide the absolute identity that we tend to associate with the self. James believes, however, that if we reflect on the history of our individual existence, we do not find anything like the absolute identity of the pure ego that many of us had assumed existed. We find instead, that change and growth are real features of the self. I am, for example, no longer the

infant I was, and I am not yet the senile invalid I may become. According to James, the self is that mixture of identity and diversity that we all recognize as forming a part of our existence.

James believed that John Locke had taken a step in the right direction when he treated personal identity as the identity of which we are conscious, the experience that "makes a man be himself to himself."[46] To James, "the importance of Locke's doctrine lay in this, that he eliminated 'substantial' identity as transcendental and unimportant, and made of 'personal' identity (the only practically important sort) a directly verifiable empirical phenomenon. Where not actually experienced, it is not."[47] Unfortunately Locke didn't appreciate the full significance of his own analysis and retreated back to the substantial soul. James, however, realizing fully the breakthrough that Locke had made, saw no need to bring in any unexperienced entity to account for one's experienced self-identity. As Ralph Barton Perry has pointed out, the significance of this step lies in the fact that the self takes its place within

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[46]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book II, chap. XXVII, 10.

[47]William James, "Person and Personality," Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia, (1895), VI, p. 539, cited by Ralph Barton Perry in In the Spirit of William James, p. 86.

the field of its own knowing.[48]

The Jamesian conception of the self that I have sketched here in this section in a rough fashion may appear at first glance to portray the self as too mysterious and too complicated. James was, however, simply dedicated to describing the self as it presents itself in experience. James never had a fondness for overly complicated explanations and in this regard he was highly critical of Kant. He did, however, have a fondness for being totally faithful to what is revealed in experience. It was this later fondness that resulted in his complex conception of the self. He could not ignore the fact that the self presents itself as not having the transparent being of a thing. We have a natural tendency to treat the self as a thing because experience mainly deals with things. We have a similar problem with time. This tendency to treat the self as a "thing" has led to various reductionistic approaches to the self which have tried to reduce it to the body, or the soul, or a combination of these two. On the other hand, James tried to be faithful to all the experiential features of selfhood which together suggest that the self exists in a manner quite different from that of a "thing." It is the uniqueness of personal existence itself which led to James' complex conception of the self.

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[48]Ralph Barton Perry, In The Spirit of William James (Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1958), p. 86.

It is important to note here that this interpretation of James' theory of the self happens also to be the kind of self that was suggested by his four critiques. All that James found lacking in the alternative views of the self can be found here in the Jamesian self we have been describing. This self is: (1) active and efficacious, (2) historical, (3) possessing both objective and subjective aspects, (4) mutable and (5) experiencable.

Although this Jamesian view of the self may appear initially as rather strange, it is actually in agreement with and is supported by our everyday commonsense views on selfhood. We usually do not view the self as being simply the physical body, but we also do not view the self as being non-bodily. We usually do not view the self as being just the present acting pulse of thought, but we also do not view this as being outside of the self. We usually do not view the self as being simply all of those images that we think others have of us, yet we recognize that these images have a huge role to play in our experience of selfhood. We usually think of the self as something which has more than a momentary existence and yet something which is capable of change and growth. All of these common opinions regarding the self suggest the Jamesian self that we have described above as self-constituting-historical-existence. I am not here suggesting that we ought to embrace this Jamesian conception of the self because it is in agreement with common

sense. I am now rather making the more humble claim as Bishop Berkeley once did in behalf of his own theory, that this theory is not as strange and as anti-commonsense as it might initially seem. This point will become even more apparent in the following sections where this Jamesian account of the self will be analyzed and evaluated in greater detail.

PART FOUR

THE OBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF THE SELF

Most everything that one is tempted to call "his" tends to form a part of the objective dimension of the self. James describes the objective self in a very broad manner. One's objective self consists of all the objects that one cares for. What is called the "ME" is simply a field of care, and it can include one's body, past mental activity, clothes, house, family, reputation, work, etc.

One's "me" is never a stable, isolable, self-identical thing. It manifests itself differently in different contexts. Much more than a body, the objective self is a fluctuating material. The objective dimension of the self is found by James to be a single network or field composed of an interrelated plurality of selves. It does not come fully developed. The objective self is constructed in time through a process in which care is attached to phenomena which generate an intense interest. The body tends to be the first object of care but slowly the field of care expands to include other objects which have the power to produce in a stream of consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort. Together these objects form the complex field known as the objective self. This self-field can be analyzed into three distinct areas: (1) the material me, (2) the social me, and (3) the spiritual me. The material me refers first

to the body which is its central part and then to clothes, immediate family, home and other physical objects of care. The social me refers to the images that we think others have of us, and there are as many social selves as there are individuals or groups of people who know us and whom we think carry an image of us in their minds. The spiritual me indicates one's inner or subjective being which James calls the "home of interests."[49]

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[49] Principles, I, p. 285.

A. THE MATERIAL ME

The body lies at the core of the material me. "My own body" says James "and what ministers to its needs are thus the primitive objects, instinctively determined, of my egoistic interest."[50] Each of us seem to have a natural fondness for our body, clothing, family, friends and the objects that we make and own. These items tend to constitute in varying degrees one's material me. We have a propensity to identify ourselves with these objects to such a degree that if one of them is destroyed, we experience a "shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness."[51]

James is making the amazing claim here that his material me transcends his physical body. At first glance it appears to be a rather strange claim and yet it seems after careful analysis to be supported by our common experience of selfhood. This expansive view of the material me is, for example, able to account for a number of facts of human behavior where the welfare of one's own body is subordinated to other concerns. Why is the artist willing to endure an impoverished existence for the sake of his art? Or why is the miser ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of his

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[50] Ibid., I, p. 308.

[51] Ibid., I, p. 281.

gold? The facts of personal existence suggest that the material me does not simply lie under the skin. My total material me extends well beyond the boundaries of the biological sciences. One's material me is actually a "field" of objects centered in the body, stretched out around it in space and time. I actually am this whole field united through care.

In a Pluralistic Universe, James describes his expansive view of the self in the following manner:

> My present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more ....What we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze.[52]

The items that compose my material me are all objects of natural preference or are associated with such objects. They are things that tend to be related to the most vital interests of the organism. There exists a natural propensity to protect one's body, to care for one's parents, wife and children, to find a home and improve it and to make and collect things of value. We come to identify ourselves with these cherished things. We do it to such an extent that an

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[52]William James, A Pluralistic Universe, ed. F. Burkhardt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 130.

attack upon any of them is taken to be as an attack upon one's person. You laugh at my attire and you are laughing at me. My child's misdeeds are my shame. You don't appreciate my artistic creations and you are ignoring me. Moreover, when any of these cherished objects of one's material me disappears, one feels a shrinkage of self. James writes, "Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone."[53] All the ingredients that go into forming one's material me create in one the same feeling of care with variations only in intensity.

Normally, the objects of care that come to compose one's material me belong to a special narrow range of things, nevertheless in principle any object is a possible candidate through care. One might argue that the admission that anything could become a part of the self constitutes a reductio ad absurdum of the Jamesian view of self. Would James admit a baseball team as a possible constituent of a self? He would have to, but even though he did, he would not be admitting to a reductio. A self that included a baseball team would be regarded as strange, but it would still be a self for it is an object's power to generate care rather than its other characteristics that mark it as part of a self. One may at this point argue that though James position is not a reductio ad absurdum it is nevertheless counter-intuitive. But is it really counter-intuitive? Is

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[53]James, Principles, I, p. 280.

it any more counter-intuitive than the alternatives argued against it? Is it really any less implausible to claim that the self is a spiritual substance?, or a transcendental ego?, or a physical mass? or a packet of memories? From one perspective a theory of the self that allows for the possibility of a sports team becoming part of a self appears ridiculous and yet from another perspective, for example, the first person perspective of the sports fan, such a view seems not at all at odds with one's lived experience of the field of the personal. Does not the enthusiastic sports fan come to identify with his team? Isn't his team's victory his victory, and his team's defeat his defeat? On a cold December Sunday in 1963 the Chicago Bears won the National Football League Championship, and this event had no bearing whatsoever on my material well being, and yet I was ecstatic over it. Why was I so affected by this team's good fortune? The answer is quite simple. I had become so intensely involved with the Bears that year that they came to form a part of my selfhood. I felt ecstatic that Sunday long ago because their victory was my victory. If one reflects deeply upon one's own personal existence, James' field conception of the self does not appear at all counter-intuitive. My material me truly transcends the boundaries of my physical body. It is this form of transcendence and not the Kantian kind that distinguishes the field of the personal from that of both the merely physical and the merely organic.

B. THE SOCIAL ME

The social ME refers to the recognition we get from others. Since you exist in your social relations, you have as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion you care. You are the various roles you adopt in your family, your profession and in the different organizations of which you are a member. As one moves from one social setting to another, there seems to occur changes in one's behavior and character. We present, for example, a different self to our employees than we do to our children. "Properly speaking," says James, "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind."[54] James should have added here after the word "who," "that he thinks" for all social selves are really what we feel others think of us and not necessarily what they do in fact think of us. James does, however, makes this point clear in other passages.

We identify ourselves with the mental portraits that we suspect others are carrying of us to such an extent that we feel hurt when these images are tarnished in any way. We do it to such a degree that one is tempted to claim that we live primarily in the hearts and minds of others. For some, this very notion actually removes some of the sting of death.

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[54] Ibid., I, pp. 281-282.

There have been many an artist who has labored without recognition with the hope that some future generation would come to appreciate his genius. All this points to the fact that the self is not a monad or as Sartre would say not just a being-for-itself but also a being-for-others.

We often don't appreciate the real importance of these images that we think others have of us until we are rejected by a friend or especially by a lover. It is mainly on such occasions that we realize just how much our very self is wrapped up in these images. A rejected lover contemplates suicide because he feels that a good part of himself is already dead and gone. James describes this special social self in the following manner:

> The most peculiar social self which one is apt to have is in the mind of the person one is in love with. The good or bad fortunes of this self cause the most intense elation and dejection -- unreasonable enough as measured by every other standard than that of the organic feeling of the individual. To his own consciousness he is not, so long as this particular social self fails to get recognition, and when it is recognized his contentment passes all bounds.[55]

One's honor is another kind of social self. It refers to one's image in the eyes of his fellow colleagues. It measures how well one lives up to a particular standard of conduct associated with one's station in life. It is this social self that tends to discourage soldiers from crying,

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[55] Ibid., I, p. 282.

professors from writing trashy novels, and priests from going to the race track. This social self is often referred to as "club-opinion." James notes that it carries a great deal of force in everyday life. "The thief must not steal from other thieves; the gambler must pay his gambling debts though he pay no other debts in the world."[56]

The significance of this particular social self called honor was recognized recently in our political history. In pardoning President Nixon, President Ford argued that the loss of his honor would be more punishing to former President Nixon than any prison sentence. The argument found acceptance only among those who recognized the importance of this particular social self in one's being as a person. The true significance of it is perhaps only fully recognized by those who have experienced at one time a fall from grace.

John Locke was also familiar with the significance of this particular social self called honor. He states in his Essay,

> Solitude many men have sought and been reconciled to; but nobody that has the least thought or sense of a man about him can live in society under the constant dislike and ill opinion of his families and those he converses with. This is a burden too heavy for human sufferance: and he must be made up of irreconcilable contradictions who can take pleasure in company and yet be insensible of contempt and disgrace from his companions."[57]

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[56] Ibid., I, p. 283.

[57] John Locke, Essay, book II Ch XXVIII, sec. 12.

The importance of the social ME in the experience of selfhood should not be underestimated. Many a man has sacrificed his bodily existence for the sake of preserving his image in the minds of his comrades. The much talked about "peer pressure" indicates the enormous influence of a particular social ME on one's behavior. In a recent popular poll of the greatest fears of man, it was found that "fear of death" lagged far behind "fear of public speaking." This suggests that most of us are often more concerned about our social ME than our material ME. We tend to preserve at all cost the positive images that we think others have of us for they form a huge part of our experience of selfhood. This is why so many of us are ready to risk bodily harm in defense of our good name when someone attacks us merely with words.

The social character of the Jamesian self has been ignored for the most part or treated very briefly by Jamesian scholars.[58] Even John Dewey who held that selves have no existence save for environing conditions failed to note in his interpretation of the Jamesian self that for James the "environing conditions" are primarily social in character. While Dewey stressed the organic specification of the "Self of selves," he did not attend to the social specification

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[58]The two most notable exceptions to this are John Wild, The Radical Empiricism of William James, op. cit. and Henry S. Levinson, Science, Metaphysics and the Chance of Salvation: An Intrepretation of the Thought of William James (Dissertation series - American Academy of Religion; no. 24) 1978.

that occurred in the very same paragraph of the Principles of Psychology: "...the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a Self of the social sort...."[59] As we shall make clear in part seven of this study, the social feature of the Jamesian self is no less fundamental than its agency or its temporality. No self, in James' view, is devoid of social significance.

In James' writings, the social me is recognized as a vital part of the objective self. All of us have a need to be noticed and noticed with admiration and approval. This is why total isolation is often considered the worst form of punishment. The images that we believe others have of us do indeed constitute a considerable part of our feeling of selfhood. We are to a great extent the roles that we assume in society. Nevertheless, for James the objective self is not merely social in nature for there is beside the social ME, a material ME and a spiritual ME. It is to the spiritual ME that we must now turn.

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[59] Principles, I, p. 301.

C. THE SPIRITUAL ME

The third area of the objective dimension of the self is what James calls the spiritual self. The term is quite misleading for the spiritual ME is not a spiritual substance at all but is rather what we experience when we try to catch our mental activity in process. The spiritual ME for James is one's psychic powers or dispositions taken concretely. To be more precise, it is one's past subjectivity viewed as an object. It is not the principle of personal unity, the pure I, and it is not the soul.

James describes the spiritual ME as "the self of all the other selves," "the sanctuary within the citadel" and "the innermost center within the circle." It presents itself as an active element of experience. James writes,

> It is what welcomes or rejects. It presides over the perceptions of sensations, and by giving or withholding its assent it influences the movements they tend to arouse. It is the home of interest...It is the source of effort and attention, and the place from which appear to emanate the fiats of the will.[60]

A certain ambiguity surrounds James' description of the spiritual ME. On certain occasions, he seems to be identifying the spiritual ME with the "I" or subject of experience. For James, however, the spiritual ME is not the

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[60] Ibid., I, p. 285.

subject of experience, and such a view is really a misinterpretation of the Jamesian self motivated in part by James uncautious description of the spiritual ME. We must keep in mind that James began his discussion of the spiritual ME by stating unambiguously, "By the Spiritual Self, so far as it belongs to the Empirical Me, I mean a man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions, taken concretely; not the bare principle of personal Unity or 'pure' Ego, which remains to be discussed."[61]

We should also not forget that he began his chapter on the self by stating,

> The constituents of the Self may be divided into two classes, those which make up respectively - (a) the material Self; (b) the social Self; (c) the spiritual Self; and (d) the pure Ego.[62]

These words of James make it clear that the spiritual self is not the same as the subject of experience. The two classes which James refers to here are (1) the empirical self made up of (a) the material ME (b) the social ME and (c) the spiritual ME and (2) the pure Ego which is subjectivity itself. These two classes are what we refer to as the objective and subjective dimensions of the self.

The spiritual ME is part of the empirical self and as such it is entirely objective. It is an object for the present pulse of consciousness and is not itself the present

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[61] Ibid., I, p. 283.

[62] Ibid., I, p. 280.

pulse of consciousness. Past pulses of consciousness can be grasped as objects by a reflective act of the present pulse of consciousness. These past acts of consciousness are all part of the spiritual ME and the objective dimension of the self. The present pulse which is doing the reflecting is on the other hand not an object and not part of the spiritual self as yet, but is presently functioning as the subjective dimension of the self. One might say that the spiritual ME is a collection of the past "I's" for the present "I." A transformation occurs, however, to the "I" as it recedes into the past and becomes a mere object for a new "I." In this process it ceases to function as an "I." Thus, when we grasp it in reflection, we are not really grasping the "I" at all for the present subject of experience remains by its very nature beyond our grasp. Our predicament is like that of grasping a snowflake to examine its intricate structure. With the grasp it ceases to be a snowflake and becomes something else, a drop of water. The same is true of subjectivity. In objectifying it, we transform it. The spiritual ME is objectified subjectivity as the drop of water is a melted snowflake.

As the function of all objectification, consciousness is itself necessarily pre-objective. As the indispensable subjective condition for all objectification, it is itself beyond objectification and remains always the pre-reflective awareness "that," which is the experiential condition of all

reflexive awareness of "what." James writes,

> The present moment of consciousness is thus, as Mr. Hodgson says, the darkest in the whole series. It may feel its own immediate existence -- we have all along admitted the possibility of this, hard as it is by direct introspection to ascertain the fact -- but nothing can be known about it till it be dead and gone.[63]

The above facts become very important when James goes on to discover that the spiritual ME is mainly a feeling of embodiment. Some interpreters of James believing that the spiritual self is the subject of experience feel that James has reduced the subject to the physical body and that he is really presenting a behavioristic view of the self. What James is saying here, however, is that subjectivity manifest itself objectively in reflection as an embodied "I"-ness. In other words, in reflection the body is felt as the vehicle of consciousness. Consciousness is not denied and James is no materialist.

Failure to note and appreciate James' distinction between the spiritual me which is specified primarily in terms of bodily movement and the "I" which is specified exclusively in terms of the present pulse of consciousness has fostered behavioristic interpretations of the Jamesian self and charges that James was a materialist. John Dewey and James Bayley, for example, have each emphasized what they regard as the behavioristic character of James' account of

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[63] Ibid., I, p. 323.

the self.[64] Even George Santayana failed to recognize the breakthrough that James had made. Santayana wrote in his review of the Principles "Professor James...has here outdone the materialists themselves."[65]

Now that we have made clear that the spiritual ME is not the present subject of experience, let us examine more closely James' positive description of it. We pointed out above that it is our psychic power or dispositions taken concretely in reflection. It is what we feel when we try to catch our own subjectivity in introspection. In introspection, James finds that it is difficult for him to discover any purely spiritual element. In his efforts to catch the source of effort and attention, he finds himself grasping some corporeal event occuring mostly in his head. James writes,

> Whenever my introspection glance succeeds in turning round quickly enough to catch one of these manifestations of spontaneity in the act, all it can ever feel distinctly is some bodily process, for the most part taking place within the head.[66]

Let me repeat, what is involved here is no denial of thought or emotions, but rather the more modest claim that we are unable to grasp these in reflection as being nonbodily or

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[64] Dewey, op. cit., and James Bayley, "A Jamesian Theory of Self," Transactions of the Charles Peirce Society, Vol. 12, pp. 148-165, (Spring, 1976).

[65] George Santayana, Atlantic Monthly, 67 (April 1891), p. 555.

[66] Principles, I, p. 287.

completely psychical. The body is always felt as the vehicle of consciousness.

Andrew Reck shares this view. Although he recognizes that James' analysis of the spiritual self returns to the body for its primary meaning, he points out that this does not mean that James is embracing a reductive behaviorism. Reck notes that there remains in James' account two foci. The present passing thought is the first focus. The experienced-body which always accompanies thought is the second focus. "The passing Thought is the self as thinker. The Body is the self as the object of all physical and mental processes."[67] In other words, selfhood entails two inseparable dimensions for the self is an irreducible subjective-objective temporal process.

In his own introspective glance James discovers vague feelings of something more than the experience of embodiment. Is this vague feeling the feeling of subjectivity itself? At this point James leaves it an open question. He writes,

> ...there is an obscurer feeling of something more; but whether it be of fainter physiological processes, or of nothing objective at all, but rather of subjectivity as such, of thought become 'its own object,' must at present remain an open question...Farther than this we cannot as yet go clearly in our analysis of the Self's constituents.[68]

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[67] Reck, op. cit. p. 311.

[68] Principles I, p. 292.

In the above quote we find a hint of his later claim that although we can't have "knowledge about" we can have a feeling of or "knowledge by acquaintance" of our own subjectivity. He leaves the issue an open question here because his discussion now is of the empirical self only i.e. the self that we can have "knowledge about" and not mere "knowledge by acquaintance." In saying "Farther than this we cannot as yet go" he is suggesting there will be a deeper penetration of this issue when he comes to discuss the subjective dimension of the self.

But here in his discussion of the objective dimension of the self James is exploring the structure of the lived-body in a way that anticipates the work of Merleau-Ponty in The Phenomenology of Perception. It was not the body of physiology, the mere mass of matter extended in space, that James saw as forming the spiritual me. It was rather the moving, living conscious body which James regarded as the spiritual ME. The body of physiology creates less of that peculiar interest we described earlier, and so forms a part only of the material ME and does not belong to what James calls "the sanctuary within the citadel" i.e. the spiritual ME. We must now take a closer look at this spiritualized-body to see how it functions as the heart of the entire objective dimension of the self.

D. THE ME AS A FIELD OF CARE CENTERED IN THE LIVED-BODY

The material ME, the social ME and the spiritual ME together form a single unified field which we call the objective dimension of the self. At the center of this self-field is the lived-body. James found that though the various "ME"s which form the objective dimension of the self are not all reducible to my physical body, each does carry as part of its meaning a reference to my lived-body. He writes,

> ...each human mind's appearance on this earth is conditioned upon the integrity of the body with which it belongs, upon the treatment which that body gets from others, and upon the spiritual dispositions which use it as their tool, and lead it either towards longevity or destruction.[69]

James believes that one's body can never be perceived as just another object of consciousness. We know it first of all by "direct sensible acquaintance."[70] It is never felt as an isolated thing. "Never is the body felt all alone, but always together with other things."[71] The body lying at the center of the self's objective dimension is never experienced apart from the experienced-world. This lived-body is inseparably linked to the lived-world. In all this, James anticipates the work of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty.

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[69] Ibid., I, p. 307.

[70] Ibid., I, p. 286.

[71] Ibid.

James insists that the body is concommitantly experienced with every object of experience, and it is that object in terms of which other objects are themselves located and objectified with respect to one another and with respect to the subject of experience. For James, the body is the core of experience and the origin of reality. He writes,

> The world experienced (otherwise called the 'field of consciousness') comes at all times with our body as its centre, centre of vision, centre of action, centre of interest...The body is the storm centre, the origin of co-ordinates, the constant place of stress in all that experience-train. Everything circles round it, and is felt from its point of view. The word 'I' then is primarily a noun of position, just like 'this' and 'here'.[72]

James notes that words like 'here' 'now' and 'this' imply a systematization of things with references to a focus of action and interest of the subjectivized-body. "Where the body is 'here'; when the body acts is 'now'; what the body touches is 'this'; all other things are 'there' 'then' and 'that'."[73]

For James, a thing is viewed as real when it is known in a fringe of relationships, the main one being a practical relationship to one's body. If an object is so fringed, it is regarded as part of the same world inhabited by one's body. We believe in the reality of an object when we feel that the object belongs to the past, present or future of the

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[72]James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, ed. F. Bowers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 86n.

[73]Ibid.

same spatial-temporal field as our body. This view put forth in the Principles of Psychology later became a central feature of James' pragmatic theory of meaning and truth.

James maintains that some awareness of the body accompanies all awareness. There is always some nonfocal awareness of one's body. Since the body is in the fringe of all experiences, there is always a marginal prereflective continuous sense of personal existence.

There are at least six reasons why James regards the body as the objective center of the Self-Field: (1) the self of selves, i.e., the spiritual self is discovered to be primarily the experience of embodiment; (2) all the selves whether material, social or spiritual carry as part of their meaning a reference to the body; (3) the body is that persistent object in the field of experience which makes the judgment of self-identity possible; (4) the body is required for the appropriation of past acts of consciousness; (5) the body is the first and also the most intimate and the most interesting object in the whole field of care known as the ME; (6) the wider self is built up around and knitted to the body and other objects tend to become interesting derivatively through it.

Some of these reasons we have already touched upon and the others we will discuss in detail when we deal with the concrete full self and the constitution of the ME. For now we merely want to make it clear that for James the body

serves as the center of the objective dimension of the self.

Although we can't over emphasize the importance of the body, we must nevertheless keep in mind that it occupies only the center of the self-field which is irreducible to it or to anything else. This self-field is a field of objects that are related by being cared for. The objective dimension of the self is simply the totality of the cared-for. We must also remember that the cared-for exist as cared-for only by virtue of the caring. Caring is a function of the present pulse of subjectivity. A self is the irreducible unity of these subjective and objective dimensions. We must not, therefore, stop our analysis of the Self (as many have) with our description of the field of care and the function of the body.[74] We must also examine the caring for the caring itself is not something outside the self but is perhaps the most personalized part of the self. A Self is the dynamic unity of the caring present and the cared-for. It is that totality that we represent symbolically as I⟺ME and which we call Self-Constituting-Historical-Existence. It is to the caring-present that we must now turn.

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[74]Wilshire is one Jamesian interpreter who does stop here. op. cit.

PART FIVE

THE SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF THE SELF

Our focus now shifts to that aspect of the self that is often referred to as the subject of experience. In our investigation of the subjective dimension of personal existence we will be exploring James' theory of consciousness with special attention devoted to its unity, temporality, activity and its caring character.

A. THE FIVE TRAITS OF THOUGHT

James believes that the first fact that all psychologists must accept is "that thinking of some sort goes on."[75] James uses the word thinking here to cover all forms of consciousness. In his exploration of how thought goes on, James discovers that it has five fundamental characteristics. It is personal, changing, sensibly continuous, cognitive and selective. He writes,

> (1) Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness. (2) Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing. (3) Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous. (4) It always appears to deal with objects independent of itself. (5) It is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others, and welcomes or rejects - chooses from among them, in a word - all the while.[76]

James' chapter on the stream of thought in the Principles of Psychology is perhaps just as important for a correct understanding of the Jamesian self as his subsequent chapter that deals exclusively with the self. Interpreters of James' conception of the self tend, however, not to give sufficient emphasis to this chapter that deals with the nature of consciousness. To ignore this chapter, however, is

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[75] Principles, I, p. 219.

[76] Ibid., I, p. 220.

to ignore our best clues regarding the subjective dimension of the Jamesian self.

THE FIRST TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

What does James mean when he states, "Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness?" This first trait of thought means primarily that no thought has an isolated existence and each thought belongs with only certain other thoughts. The thoughts I have belong with other thoughts that I have and the thoughts that you have belong with other thoughts that you have. Between individuals there is no sharing of pulses of subjectivity. James insists that the existence of personal selves can not be doubted by any psychology for the universal fact is not "thoughts exist" but "I think". Each single thought always forms a part of an individual personal consciousness. It is absurd to talk of thoughts apart from the self. Even so called subconscious thought is not really a case of nonpersonal thought for such modes of consciousness are either on the fringe of the main self or they belong to secondary selves. Every thought is owned. The basic fact of subjectivity is not thought or this thought or that thought but "my thought."[77] The law of consciousness is "absolute insulation and irreducible pluralism."[78]

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[77] Ibid., I, p. 221.

[78] Ibid.

James believes that the ultimate source of the notion of personality lies with the stream of thought. To refuse to personify the stream of thought would be foolish for it is already personified. James feels that the biggest error a psychology can commit is to interpret the stream of thought in a reductionist manner so as to steal from this stream its personal quality. My thinking is not merely one of the many activities that I perform. I am my thinking. I exist through it and when it ceases irretrievably so do I. "I think therefore I am," is true because this thinking is to a great extent what I am, and yet I am even more than this. I am more because I am a being that has both a subjective and an objective dimension.

The subject of experience is not something behind the stream of thought like a soul or transcendental ego. James insists that the present segment of the stream of thought functions as the subject. Here is the "I" of experience, and besides this present pulse of thought, there is no other "I" nor is there a need for one.

The precise meaning of the first trait of thought will not be made totally clear until we have completed our explanation of the Jamesian self. When James discusses this first fundamental characteristic of the stream of consciousness, he also warns the reader that what he means when he says consciousness always tends to be personal will not become clear until he has finished his analysis of the self.

THE SECOND TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Constant change is the second fundamental characteristic of consciousness. This second trait of thought does not mean that there is no duration to mental states. To say that thought is constantly changing means for James that no mental state once gone can return and be identical with what it was before. The same pulse of consciousness never returns although the same object may come back repeatedly. James rejects Locke's notion of mental atoms for there is no proof at all that we ever encounter the same thought twice. James subscribes to a temporalist conception of consciousness according to which it is a constant flux. He sees no evidence for the static atoms of thought and feeling of the associationists. The intentional activity of feeling, thinking, desiring, etc. is never exactly the same on two different occasions even if it is dealing with the same object on these occasions.

The principal reason James rejects the notion of a recurring mental state is that he feels experience is transforming us constantly and thus our mental reaction to any thing is a function of our entire experiential history up to that point in time. The significance of this fact will become prominent when we come to discuss the historical character of the self. Continuous change in consciousness is thus related to the ever present influence of accumulative

sedimentation of experience within consciousness. A thing once experienced, such as a statue, is never experienced exactly the same when it is encountered again, for one's initial encounter will influence how one experiences it when it comes again. An object is always experienced within a context and any previous experiences of it forms a part of this context. James writes,

> Every thought we have of a given fact is, strictly speaking, unique, and only bears a resemblance of kind with other thoughts of the same fact. When the identical fact recurs, we must think of it in a fresh manner, see it under a somewhat different angle, apprehend it in different relations from those in which it last appeared. And the thought by which we cognize it is the thought of it in those relations, a thought suffused with the consciousness of all that dim context.[79]

The same object is being thought of at different times by pulses of consciousness that are not the same. James regards the notion of a permanently existing idea which keeps returning to consciousness as being as mythical as the Jack of Spades. This second trait of thought will become important later on in our discussion of the role of the sense of sameness in the experience of selfhood. The sameness that we encounter is always the sameness of the object and not the sameness of the acts of consciousness. James declares, "...it would certainly be true to say, like Heraclitus, that we never descend twice into the same stream."[80]

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[79] Ibid., I, p. 227.

[80] Ibid.

THE THIRD TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness does not reveal itself as chopped up in bits. It doesn't appear in reflection as a chain of thoughts but rather as a stream of thought. In the following words James expresses the third trait of consciousness: "Within each personal consciousness, thought is sensibly continuous."[81] This character of thought means two things. It means first of all, even in the case of time-gaps, the consciousness before the gap is felt as belonging with the consciousness after the gap and both are viewed as parts of the same self. Secondly, it means that there are no absolutely abrupt changes in the quality of consciousness from one moment to the next.

Like time itself consciousness is continuous. James believes this fact is often missed because one tends to treat the thoughts themselves as if they were the same as the things of which the thoughts are aware. The acts of thought which are subjective facts are very different from the objects that they manifest. James states,

> The things are discrete and discontinuous; they do pass before us in a train or chain, making often explosive appearances and rending each other in twain. But their comings and goings and contrasts no more break the flow of the thought that thinks them than they break the time and the space in which they lie.[82]

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[81] Ibid., I, p. 231.

[82] Ibid., I, p. 233.

Between the thought of one thing and another thing there is no fissure in consciousness. Consciousness involves besides substantive states, transitive states which are the transitional states for consciousness as it goes from focusing upon one thing to focusing upon another. James points out that the transition is as much a part of consciousness as a joint in a bamboo is a part of the bamboo and not a break in the wood.

James believes that there is no break in consciousness because there is always an awareness of the recent past in the present pulse of consciousness. For example, one never experiences thunder pure, for there is always the awareness of the previous silence and thus what one really experiences is "thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it."[83] Because of this continuous retention of the recent past in the present pulse of consciousness, there is never any absolutely abrupt changes in the quality of consciousness from one moment to the next.

This third trait of consciousness means that one has not only an awareness of things but also feelings of relations, most of which are unnamed. James believes there exist feelings of "and," "if," "but" and "by" but we tend to overlook these transitive states of consciousness in favor of the objects that these relations connect. Our language with its bias towards the substantive parts makes it easy to ignore our anonymous transitional states. James reminds us,

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[83] Ibid., I, p. 234.

however, that namelessness is compatible with existence. Surrounding every image, there is always a vague consciousness of the sphere to which it is intended to belong. These transitive states are what gives meaning and direction to the stream of consciousness as it moves from attending to one thing to another.

Feelings of relations of transition and feelings of relations of tendency are often ignored because our knowledge of them is a knowledge by direct acquaintance rather than a knowledge about and because we have no precise names to cover each of their kind. James wants to reinstate the vague to its proper place in our mental life. He writes,

> This is all I have to say about the sensible continuity and unity of our thought as contrasted with the apparent discreteness of the words, images, and other means by which it seems to be carried on. Between all their substantive elements there is 'transitive' consciousness, and the words and images are 'fringed,' and not as discreet as to a careless view they seem.[84]

The unity of consciousness that results from a process of continuous appropriation is a real unity. James insists that all the pulses of consciousness melt into each other like dissolving views. "Properly they are but one protracted consciousness, one unbroken stream."[85]

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[84] Ibid., I, p. 262.

[85] Ibid., I, p. 240.

THE FOURTH TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"Human thought appears to deal with objects independent of itself; that is, it is cognitive, or possesses the function of knowing."[86] This is how James describes the fourth character of thought. This trait of consciousness entails two things: (1) the thought and its object are not one and the same and (2) the thought itself is the thinker.

James does not regard thought and feeling as total opposites. "From a cognitive point of view, all mental facts are intellectious. From the subjective point of view, all are feelings."[87] Both feeling and thought are cognitive for both reveal the world. "Acquaintance-knowledge" is given through feelings and "knowledge-about" is given through thoughts. James believes that knowledge by acquaintance is our main access to the real world. He writes,

> All elementary natures of the world, its highest genera, the simple qualities of matter and mind, together with the relations which subsist between them, must either not be known at all, or known in this dumb way of acquaintance without knowledge-about.[88]

James sees knowledge by acquaintance as constituting our main reality for two reasons: first, it signifies access to

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[86] Ibid., I, p. 262.

[87] James, "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology," Mind, IX (1884), p. 19.

[88] Principles, I, p. 217.

our most primitive contact with the world, and secondly, all knowledge-about must ultimately refer back to this original relation to the world which is disclosed in knowledge-by-acquaintance.

This conception of knowledge-by-acquaintance plays an important role in the Jamesian theory of the self. The present pulse of subjectivity which functions as the "I" only feels its existence, it has no knowledge-about with regard to itself. With his two types of knowledge, James can thus confidently assert the reality of the present "I" while still maintaining that it is the "darkest in the whole series" for we lack knowledge-about it.

In his treatment of this cognitive trait of consciousness, James points out that it is wrong to believe that the reflective consciousness of self is required by the cognitive operation of thought. Here James' conception of consciousness is in agreement with the view of Sartre presented in The Transcendence of the Ego. Consciousness according to Sartre is only non-positionally aware of itself in the present moment, although past moments of consciousness may be made into an object of knowledge through reflection. Both James and Sartre reject the notion of a permanent ego that dwells in consciousness as its source. There is no permanent subject of experience that lies behind consciousness. There is only the present pulse of consciousness which continuously functions as the "I".

Although James finds no evidence for a belief in a permanent ego that lies behind consciousness and makes consciousness of objects possible, he does believe that one's body is continuously felt on the fringe of one's conscious field and there is also a vague feeling of the pulse of subjectivity itself. So we must be careful here in our understanding of James. He is not declaring that one is at times lacking a self. On the contrary, James insists that one has a continuous awareness of one's own existence but this is knowledge by direct acquaintance which is quite different from knowledge-about the self which is gained through reflection.

Two more important points that James makes in his discussion of the cognitive character of consciousness are as follows: (1) the object of each thought is all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it, and (2) no matter how complex the object, the thought of it is one undivided pulse of consciousness.[89]

When one states "Columbus discovered America in 1492," James believes that the object of consciousness is not "Columbus" or "America" but is rather the entire sentence "Columbus-discovered-America-in-1492." This is the actual constitution of the thought. To treat one of its substantive elements as the object of consciousness is to falsify the thought. "Columbus" might be the topic of this thought, but

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[89] Ibid., I, p. 266.

it should not be regarded as the object. James recognizes the fact that there are time-parts when having this thought but he insists there are in the thought no parts corresponding to the object's parts. "Whatever things are thought in relation" says James, "are thought from the outset in a unity, in a single pulse of subjectivity, a single psychosis, feeling, or state of mind."[90]

The above statement is significant for our understanding of the relationship between the dimensions of the self which we shall soon be exploring in depth. James' position here indicates that no matter how complex the objective dimension of the self, the subjective dimension remains always a single pulse of subjectivity. For all the numerous elements of the material me, spiritual me, and social me there is one single active and irreducible "I" to which they belong.

THE FIFTH TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The fifth character of thought refers to the freedom and activity of the subjective dimension of the self. It is also this trait of consciousness which plays a major role in the constitution of the objective dimension of the self. For James, consciousness is primarily a selecting agency. James describes the fifth trait of consciousness in the following manner: "It is always interested more in one part of its object than in another, and welcomes and rejects, or chooses, all the while it thinks."[91]

[90] Ibid., I, p. 268.

[91] Ibid., I, p. 273.

James believes that consciousness is constantly selecting according to its own interest at the time. This selection occurs not only in cases of deliberations of the will, but in every experience that we have. In every act of perception, there is always accentuation and emphasis, and this is the work of the selectivity of consciousness. The formation of a conceptual order has its basis in the acts of selective attention. "Focalization, concentration of consciousness," says James, "are of its essence."[92] He writes,

> Out of what is in itself an undistinguishable, swarming continuum, devoid of distinction or emphasis, our senses makes for us, by attending to this motion and ignoring that, a world full of contrasts, of sharp accents, of abrupt changes, of picturesque light and shade.[93]

For James things themselves are simply a collection of sensible qualities which are of interest to consciousness for practical or aesthetic reasons and to which we give substantive names. The essence of a thing is also grounded in the selective attention of consciousness. Essences are not Plato's eternal Forms, rather they are simply "teleological weapons" that we employ to get a handle on the given of experience. Guided by its own ends, consciousness determines which sensations shall be regarded as real and valid. James writes,

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[92] Ibid., I, pp. 381-382.

[93] Ibid., I, p. 274.

> The mind, in short, works on the data it receives very much as a sculptor works on his block of stone. In a sense the statue stood there from eternity. But there were a thousand different ones beside it, and the sculptor alone is to thank for having extricated this one from the rest. Just so the world of each of us, however different our several views of it may be, all lay embedded in the primordial chaos of sensations, which gave the mere matter to the thought of all of us indifferently.[94]

James believes that the selective action of consciousness is most obvious in the area of ethics. In discussing the choice that consciousness makes in the field of ethics, James rejects Schopenhauer's notion that with a given fixed character only one reaction is possible under given circumstances. James says that Schopenhauer forgets that in the case of moral decision, what is being decided is the very structure of one's character itself. In significant ethical situations, the question is not merely what action shall I now take but also and more importantly, what being shall I now choose to become. This view of self transformation plays a vital role in James' discussion of sudden religious conversions in The Varieties of Religious Experience.

James believes that to a great extent we choose our "ME." The specific character of the objective dimension of the self is determined by the selectivity of consciousness. James notes that there is great similarity in a general way

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[94] Ibid., I, p. 277.

concerning the selections that each human consciousness makes. There is a strong concensus concerning what in experience functions as things and what are their essences. But James then describes one mode of conscious selection in which a "concensus never occurs." James is here referring to the selectivity of consciousness that is involved in forming one's objective self. He writes,

> There is, however, one entirely extraordinary case in which no two men ever are known to choose alike. One great splitting of the whole universe into two halves is made by each of us; and for each of us almost all of the interest attaches to one of the halves; but we all draw the line of division between them in a different place. When I say that we all call the two halves by the same names, and that those names are 'me' and 'not me' respectively, it will at once be seen what I mean.[95]

James could not have stated it any clearer that one's "ME" is formed through the selective activity of consciousness. The nature of this self constituting process will be discussed more fully in the next section. We must now examine the temporal structure of the subjective dimension of the self. All five characters of the subjective dimension of the self owe their existence to the retentional-protentional structure of consciousness or what James calls the "specious present." It is what makes consciousness a stream.

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[95] Ibid., I, pp. 277-278.

B. APPROPRIATION AND TEMPORALITY

James believes that self-identity, like the identity of any object of consciousness, rests on the power of consciousness to cognize the same object. For James, the sense of sameness forms the basis of the experience of (identical) things including those things which come to compose one's "ME." This sense of sameness is in turn grounded on the retentional-protentional character of consciousness, i.e., in the temporality of consciousness. It is this temporal structure of consciousness that allows for the lived appropriation of each pulse of consciousness by its successor.

As we noted above, two of the traits of consciousness are that it is constantly changing and sensibly continuous. In James' chapter on time, these two characteristics of thought are further explained. There is a persistent stream of consciousness despite the transitions due to the fact that the present pulse of subjectivity appropriates its predecessor and projects its successor. Without this operation we would be unable to speak of a stream of consciousness. "The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past and future, near or remote," says James, "is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present thing."[96]

[96] Ibid., I, p. 571.

James realizes that the experience of sameness would be impossible if our perception of time was simply an awareness of a succession of now points. He believes that the present moment is not a point of time; it has thickness. He writes,

> In short, the practically cognized present is no knife-edge but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a duration, with a bow and a stern, as it were, a rearward and a forward-looking end.[97]

This doctrine of the temporal fringe of consciousness was not confined to James' Principles of Psychology. On the contrary, it makes its appearance in a number of his works. In A Pluralistic Universe he writes, "If we do not feel both past and present in one field of feeling, we feel them not at all."[98] In Essays in Radical Empiricism he declares that the identity of each personal consciousness is based on the fact that each new experience has past time for part of its 'content'.[99] James regards the temporal fringe as the everlasting peculiarity of the life of consciousness.

James' "specious present" makes possible both reflection and the sense of sameness, both of which are required for self-consciousness. It is the retention of the recent past in the lived-present which provides our immediate link with the past and gives to us the possibility of reflection upon

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[97] Ibid., I, p. 574.

[98] James, Pluralistic Universe, p. 128.

[99] James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 64.

the past stream of experience. The sense of sameness which requires the experience of duration also has the lived-present as its foundation. James noted that a succession of experiences is in itself not yet an experience of the succession. According to James, the past, to be experienced as "past," must be experienced together with the present and during the present moment. Thus, the sense of sameness requires the temporal fringe. James states,

> These lingerings of old objects, these incomings of new are the germs of memory and expectation, the retrospective and the prospective sense of time. They give that continuity to consciousness without which it could not be called a stream.[100]

A discussion of James' theory of the temporality of consciousness naturally leads to a discussion of his theory of the appropriation of consciousness. It is due to the temporal fringe of consciousness that appropriation of the recent past is possible. James admits that common sense seems to demand for the "Subject" a more real unity than the appropriating thought provides. The present thought seems to come already owning the past thoughts and this suggests something like an Arch-Ego which transcends and yet controls the entire stream of consciousness. James calls this the "never-lapsing ownership" feature of consciousness and he believes it can be accounted for without an "Arch-Ego" and

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[100] Principles, I, pp. 571-572.

without the thought that is the present owner being substantially indentical with the thought that was the past owner. According to James, there is a continuous transmission of ownership such that the title of a collective self is passed from one thought to another. The present thought is not substantially identical with the preceding thought but he does inherit his title of "I" in such a way that the past self is always owned by a title that never lapses and is constantly being transmitted. James writes,

> Each pulse of cognitive consciousness, each thought dies away and is replaced by another. The other, among the things it knows, knows its own predecessor, and finding it 'warm', in the way we have described, greets it, saying: "Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me." Each later thought, knowing and including thus the thoughts which went before, is the final owner - of all that they contain and own. Each thought is, thus born an owner and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realized as its Self to its own later proprietor.[101]

The body plays a vital role in this process of appropriation. Since the present pulse of subjectivity has no knowledge about itself in the present moment, its appropriations are projected onto the lived-body which always forms a non-focal part of its present object.[102] The past stream of consciousness is thus appropriated to the body by the present pulse of consciousness with its temporal fringe. The body is the kernel to which the past and future

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[101] Ibid., I, p. 322.

[102] Ibid., I, p. 323.

dimensions of the self are appropriated by consciousness.

Of all of James' interpreters, A. J. Ayer gives the most elaborate analysis of James' theory of appropriation. Ayer is correct in emphasizing the crucial role this process plays in personal identity. Nevertheless, Ayer is wrong in reproaching James for ignoring the role the body plays in the experience of personal identity. According to Ayer, James only employs the experience of embodiment to account for one's present feeling of selfhood. He claims that James does not rely on the body in his account of how experiences which occur at different times are assigned to the same self. Ayer thus concludes, "It is, therefore, to this process of appropriation and not the construction [of the body] that he looks for the source of personal identity."[103] On this point Ayer is mistaken. For James self-identity involves both the functional identity of consciousness and the constituted identity of the objective self of which the body is the core. Moreover the body according to James is involved in the process of appropriation itself which is responsible for the functional identity of consciousness.

James' analysis of the subjective dimension of the self, then, returns to a discussion of the body, the core of the objective dimension of the self. This does not mean that James is developing a reductive behavioristic theory of the self. It means rather the inseparability of the subjective

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[103] A. J. Ayer The Origins of Pragmatism, (San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper & Company, 1968), p. 254.

and the objective dimensions of the self. Neither dimension is reduced to the other for there remains for James two foci. First, there is the pulse of thought which perishes immediately. Second, there is the experience of embodiment which is a constant accompaniment of thought. The body provides the continuity required for the continuous appropriation of one's past mental life and so it serves as the objective core of the self.

C. THE EXISTENCE OF THE "I" AND ITS ACTIVITY

Do we have an "I" that really exists and is it a real agent? After having discussed the five traits of consciousness, its temporality, and its acts of self appropriation, it should be clear that the answer to both questions is yes. There is no substantial soul and there is no pure ego, but there is nonetheless an "I" which exist and acts. In discussing the selective character of consciousness we have already touched upon the activity of the "I". Now we must decide if this selectivity means the "I" is truly efficacious and the self exists as a real agent in the world.

Many interpreters of James have regarded the Jamesian self as something totally objective. John Dewey was one of the first to view James in this light in his article "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James." Dewey argues that certain passages in the Principles of Psychology suggest a reduction of the "subject" to a vanishing point save as "subject" is identified with the organism. He concludes his article, however, with these words which seem to support our position on the Jamesian self:

> Nevertheless the dualism reappears, for he still assumes that a "passing thought" must be there as the knowing subject. Hence after recurring to his doctrine that "'perishing' pulses of thought" are what know, he makes what on the face of it looks like an extraordinary compromise between the "pulse of thought" as I and the "empirical person" as ME.[104]

[104] John Dewey, op. cit., p. 598.

This "extraordinary compromise" is what this essay is all about. This is precisely what the self is, an extraordinary compromise. It is that alleged impossibility which Sartre called pour-et-en-soi. For Sartre it is man's impossible goal, while for James, it is what each of us already is. Each of us is an extraordinary compromise of spontaneity and sedimentation.

James' denial of a permanent substantial subject should not be regarded as denying the existence of the "I". The "I" exists in the only way an "I" can exist, that is, as the present pulse of subjectivity. Each perishing pulse of thought functions as an "I" and so the "I" is a reality and not just a word or something ideal.

James admits that the "I" viewed as the thinker, as that to which all the concrete features of the objective self belong and are known, seems to suggest "a permanent abiding principle of spiritual activity identical with itself wherever found."[105] If it wasn't for the reality of perishing pulses of consciousness, James points out that we would be required to posit an abiding principle, absolutely one with itself. Once the reality of passing states of consciousness is recognized, however, there is no need to believe that the thinker posesses such substantiality and permanence. James argues that a functional identity is the only sort of identity in the thinker which the facts

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[105] James, Psychology, Briefer Course (Riverside New Jersey: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1962), p. 202.

indicate. He writes,

> Yesterday's and today's states of consciousness have no substantial identity, for when one is here the other is irrevocably dead and gone. But they have a functional identity, for both know the same objects, and so far as the by-gone me is one of those objects, they react upon it in an identical way, greeting it and calling it mine, and opposing it to all the other things they know ... Successive thinkers, numerically distinct, but all aware of the same past in the same way, form an adequate vehicle for all the experience of personal unity and sameness which we actually have. And just such a train of successive thinkers is the stream of mental states....[106]

What all this means is that the "I" exists, but its existence is temporary. Through continuous acts of appropriation it has, however, a functional identity with all the "I"s that preceded it and all the "I"s that will come after it. Each pulse of consciousness in its turn will function as the subject of experience before passing this title to its successor. An "I" which is transitory may seem strange to one who believes in the absolute permanent identity of the self, but a non-transitory I seems just as odd to one who believes in the spontaneity of the self and its ability to change and grow. James, needless to say, was a firm believer in the latter.

Following Dewey's lead some Jamesian scholars treat James' perishing pulses of thought as merely tools for the

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[106] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

real subject of experience - the body.[107] These interpreters of James assume that if he denies the soul and the transcendental ego, he must affirm the body as the subject of experience. But in truth the Jamesian subject of experience is the present passing thought, and this is why he refers to it as the "I". Since the subject of experience has been generally regarded by philosophers as something more or less permanent, it is easy to understand their hesitancy to view the perishing pulse of consciousness as the subject. For James, however, the temporary nature of the pulse of consciousness does not make it any less real or any less active or any less worthy of the term "I". It only appears as an unworthy candidate for the term "I" to those who still imagine a more permanent "I" like a soul or a transcendental ego. James believes his less permanent "I" is better able to account for self-becoming and growth and moreover this "I" is experiencable.

In the Psychology, Briefer Course James points out that the "I" is a much more difficult subject of inquiry than the ME. By the "I" James means "that which at any given moment is conscious."[108] The "I" is the Thinker. James then ponders the question, what is the thinker? He writes,

> Is it the passing state of consciousness itself, or is it something deeper and less mutable? The passing state we have seen to be the very embodiment of change. Yet each of us spontaneously considers

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[107] See Hans Linschoten, op. cit., Bruce Wilshire op. cit. and James Bayley op. cit.

[108] James, Psychology, Briefer Course, p. 195.

> that by 'I', he means something always the same. This has led most philosophers to postulate behind the passing state of consciousness a permanent Substance or Agent whose modification or act it is. This Agent is the thinker; the 'state' is only its instrument or means. 'Soul', 'transcendental Ego', 'Spirit', are so many names for this more permanent sort of Thinker.[109]

After examining the grounds for admitting a more permanent agent then the present pulse of consciousness James concludes "...we had better cling to our passing 'states' as the exclusive agents of knowledge;...."[110] James' reasons for taking this position are simple: (1) We have no experience of any of these alleged "more permanent agents" and (2) A "more permanent agent" is not needed to account for the facts of our mental life or our sense of personal identity.

For James then the present pulse of consciousness is the Thinker and even though this "I" lacks knowledge-about itself, it does feel its own immediate existence.[111] This present pulse of conscious life is a genuine reality. It may be the "darkest in the whole series" but this doesn't mean that it cannot feel prereflectively its own existence in the very act. Unless the present pulse of subjectivity was so aware of itself, it would be unable to appropriate past segments of consciousness and view them as warm and intimate.

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[109] Ibid., p. 196.

[110] Ibid., p. 200.

[111] Principles, I, p. 323.

consciousness has a non-positional and pre-reflective awareness of itself, and so it contains an intrinsic self relatedness. The positional awareness of the ME is made possible by the non-positional self awareness of the "I".

It is true that James was critical of the Kantian notion that self-consciousness is essential to consciousness.[112] This does not mean, however, that James is denying that consciousness has a non-positional or pre-reflective awareness of itself. James simply means that consciousness need not objectify itself in knowing its objects. In other words, we live through out subjectivity and so directly feel it, and even though we may lack "knowledge-about-it" we always have knowledge of it by direct acquaintance.

Some of James' phenomenological disciples tend to ignore James' position here. They prefer to read into James the transcendental subjectivity of Husserl. John Wild is one of James' phenomenological interpreters, however, who recognizes the fact that for James consciousness is pre-reflectively aware of itself. Wild writes,

> For him James , the passing, present thought knows itself directly by acquaintance in the very act of knowing and choosing. For the transcendentalist, there is no such self-knowledge by direct acquaintance. My knowing and choosing can be known only as objects, or appearances, by a transcendental self that is never united with them. Hence as James says: 'the only pathway that I can discover for bringing in a more transcendental thinker would be to deny that we have any direct knowledge of the thought as such.'[113]

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[112] Ibid., I, p. 264.

[113] John Wild, op. cit., pp. 113-114, (James' quotation from Principles I p. 379).

A pulse of consciousness is not an object. As Sartre pointed out it is not a thing. It is like nothing else. It has its own unique mode of being. It is not simply nothing but is rather that reality which we feel most directly. Since all our knowledge-about deals with objects, it is difficult to even discuss that which is the condition of all objectification but is itself never an object. One can only say he feels it directly or knows it by direct acquaintance. If there is someone who doesn't feel thought going on, we can't convince him otherwise. James, like Descartes, takes the position that he directly feels his thinking activity and if others are like him, they too will feel it. James regards this as "the most fundamental of all the postulates of psychology."[114] Even in his famous essay "Does Consciousness Exist?" James does not really reverse his position on this point as Dewey and others have claimed. There James simply denies that consciousness is some kind of "thing" or "entity." James writes, "That entity is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real."[115]

In this matter Patrick Dooley and I are in agreement. In response to Dewey's claim that James' doctrine of the self amounts to an incipent biological behaviorism, Dooley writes,

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[114] Principles I, p. 185.

[115] James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 19.

> Undeniably these strains exist in the Principles, especially in the sections treating the cephalic movements as biological adjustments. However, James himself does not deny the existence of the I, the thinker. James' concern is to avoid the separation of the act of consciousness (I) from its content, which is experienced in terms of biological adjustment. The thinker is not a timeless, transcendental ego but thought in a given time and place. James repudiates both the transcendental ego and the soul for neither is experienced nor required to explain knowing and personal identity. Nonetheless he does not go so far as to equate thought with a series of behavioral adjustments.[116]

Other Jamesian scholars, while not denying James' belief in consciousness, have nevertheless placed his pulses of thought outside the self preferring to view it as a neutral stream of experience. Bruce Wilshire treats James' notion of consciousness in this manner.[117] Such an interpretation of James conflicts with his explicit position regarding the first trait of thought, i.e. that it is personal. In refutation of the view that James separates the self from consciousness, I offer the following words of James:

> The universal conscious fact is not 'feelings and thoughts exist,' but 'I think' and 'I feel' .... A French writer, speaking of our ideas, says somewhere in a fit of anti-spiritualistic excitement that, misled by certain peculiarities which they display,

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[116] Patrick Dooley, op. cit. pp. 35-36.

[117] Bruce Wilshire, op. cit.

> we 'end by personifying' the processing which they make, -- such personification being regarded by him as a great philosophic blunder on our part. It could only be a blunder if the notion of personality meant something essentially different from anything to be found in the mental processing. But if that processing be itself the very 'original' of the notion of personality, to personify it cannot possibly be wrong. It is already personified. There are no marks of personality to be gathered aliunde, and then found lacking in the train of thought.[118]

The above quotation suggest to me that though Wilshire may consider it a blunder to regard consciousness as personal and a real dimension of the self, James does not. This "fit of anti-spiritualistic excitement" is in any case not attributable to James. James believes that the quest for a nonempirical principle of selfhood only becomes necessary if we make the blunder of reducing the stream of consciousness to a neutral stream devoid of intrinsic self-relatedness.

This mis-reading of James may stem from the fact that the self has been traditionally treated as if it were a thing (material or spiritual or both). To place the present pulse of consciousness outside the self is, however, to make the self totally passive and all thought anonymous. James is, however, adament about viewing the self as active and viewing consciousness as personal. James' present pulse of consciousness is thus not simply that by which the self is apprehended and thus something external to it but rather it is the subjective dimension of the self. To isolate consciousness from the self is to abolish what James regards

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[118] Principles, I, p. 221

as the most distinguishing characteristic of the self, purposeful action. The self is for James primarily an individual agent, and it is this because one of its dimensions is subjectivity or consciousness.

The self that James describes is one that is active in space and time. It is a "fighter for ends" and the source of effort, attention and will. A spontaneous, initiating self, a self that acts on its own, means a self which is no mere object of thought. It suggests a dynamic self which has both an objective and subjective dimension.

Far from "vanishing" the Jamesian subject is not only real; it is also quite active. James believed that personal activity is a genuine and irreducible fact. He rejected the static pure ego of Kant in order to affirm an active and temporal subject. This position of James was not fully adopted until after the Principles of Psychology. In his later works, James was unambiguous in his affirmation of the creative character of self agency. In Essays in Radical Empiricism, James concluded that personal activity is "just what we feel it to be, just that kind of conjunction which our own activity series reveal."[119]

James regards the very essence of consciousness as being discrimination. Selective attention is present in all perception. Consciousness is forever emphasizing and choosing certain features of its object to focus upon. It is

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[119]James, "The Experience of Activity," Essays in Radical Empiricism, pp. 93-94.

always partial, interested, discriminitive and evaluative in character. The self is always active because there is always a single pulse of spontaneous selective attention functioning as the "I".

Consciousness is not only partial and selective, it is for James efficacious. The discriminating selection of consciousness does not operate merely on a theoretical level but actually affects the course of events in the world. James regards the materialists' conception of a superfluous consciousness as irrational. Consciousness is no mere spectator. Consciousness is always active and embodied.

We have already discussed James' criticism of the automaton theory of the self which treated consciousness as a mere epiphenomena. The critique shows that he was familiar with all the problems associated with the belief in the causal efficacy of consciousness. In his earlier writings, James maintained that the issue of determinism couldn't be settled on a purely theoretical level. During this period, he made a personal choice of indeterminism mainly because of ethical considerations. In his later works the activity of consciousness is, for James, just as real as the objects which it knows.

As we pointed out earlier, James argues for the efficacy of consciousness on the following grounds: (1) That it is directly experienced (à la Descartes). (2) It is the only way to account for the enormous correlations between pleasure

and beneficial activity and between pain and detrimental activity. (3) It is the only way to account for the enormous correlations between the feeling of effort and non-automatic responses.

James did not pretend to be able to explain how interaction between consciousness and matter occurs. He didn't believe like Descartes that it could be explained in terms of the laws of classical mechanics. He knew that his phrase "the finger of consciousness" was only a metaphor containing no explanatory insight regarding interaction between the mental and the physical. He did believe, nonetheless, that the existing evidence did favor interactionism. As for explaining it, James stated:

> That, when the idea is realized, the corresponding nerve-tracts should be modified, and so de proche en proche, the muscles contract, is one of those harmonies between inner and outer worlds, before which our reason can only avow its impotence.[120]

James admitted we can form no positive image of just how a volition affects the cells of the brain. He feels, however, that this is no reason to deny causality between the mental and the physical. He points out that even though we don't have a clear understanding of causality between physical objects we don't reject this type of causality. Despite our lack of understanding it, James goes on in the

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[120] James, "The Feeling of Effort," Collected Essays and Reviews, p. 216.

Principles of Psychology to point out that the circumstantial evidence points toward the efficaciousness of consciousness. He concludes that the belief in it is justified by the facts and asserts that the automaton theory must give way to the theory of common sense.[121]

In his chapter on the Will in the Principles of Psychology, James continued to argue for the efficacy of consciousness. Here he illustrated the issue by portraying the conflict between a natural inclination and an ideal motive as being a battle between a powerful sensual factor and a weak ideal force. By itself the ideal motive had no chance of overcoming the powerful influence of the sensual opponent unless it was supported by personal effort, which was an independent factor derived from conscious energizing. Symbolizing effort as E, propensity as P, and ideal motive as I James wrote: "But the E does not seem to form an integral part of the I. It appears adventitious and indeterminate in advance."[122] James goes on to contrast our experience of making such an effort with our strength, intelligence, and other character traits and he concludes: "But the effort seems to belong to an altogether different realm, as if it were the substantive thing which we are, and those but externals which we carry."[123]

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[121] Principles, I, p. 147.

[122] Principles, II, p. 1155.

[123] Ibid., II, p. 1181.

Later in his article "The feeling of Effort" James stated his position more forcefully. Here he declared the feeling of mental spontaneity to be "psychic effort pure and simple," and he regards it as "the inward gift of our selfhood."[124]

In his final works, A Pluralistic Universe and Some Problems of Philosophy, James unhesitantly affirmed the efficacy of consciousness. Here he spoke of "the everlasting coming of novelty into being"[125] that interactionism implies. In these works, he treated our activities and efforts as genuine ingredients of reality and part of the continuous emergence of novelty in the universe. In his President's Address before the American Psychological Association in December of 1904, James stated,

> I conclude then that real effectual causation as an ultimate nature, as a category, if you like, of reality, is just what we feel it to be, just that kind of conjunction which our own activity-series reveal.[126]

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[124]James, "The Feeling of Effort," Collected Essays and Reviews, p. 204.

[125]James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 149.

[126]James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 93.

D. CARE AS AN ESSENTIAL TRAIT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Care is of the essence of consciousness and lies at the core of selfhood. Without care there is no self at all. Selfhood centers around the feeling of care. When this goes, so does the self. Where there is total indifference, there is no self.

According to James, our acts of caring are not our own because we care for them. This caring itself has no need of a principle to make it our own. It is in relation to these pulses of feeling and interest that all else becomes our own. Since we exist and live through these subjective acts, they are our very self in a way nothing else is for they are warm and intimate in a manner in which nothing else is. For James, caring is the basic mode of self-appropriation, and the present pulse of subjectivity functions as the "I" because it is primarily a present pulse of care. As Patrick Dooley points out James' acceptance of the present pulse of consciousness as the thinker is "grounded in the empirically given selective character of consciousness."[127]

The immediate interest or care is for James the real meaning of the word "my." "Whatever has it," says James, "is eo ipso a part of me."[128] James is here challenging the

[127]Patrick Dooley, op. cit., p. 42.

[128]James, Principles, I, p. 308.

view that we must first conceptionally recognize something as our own before we can take an interest in it or care for it. Self-love and self-feeling have no need of a prior conceptual awareness of a pure ego. The objects which forms one's ME are judged to be our own because we care for them, we don't care for them because we judge them to be our own. Things don't become a part of one's ME because of some deliberate inference; they have a direct and prereflective relation to the subjective dimension of the self which cares for them. All the things which have the power to produce in the stream of consciousness excitement of a peculiar sort form a part of one's me and these objects tend to be the kind that affect one's welfare and image in the minds of others.

The mark of the presence of mind according to James is purposeful action. The positing of ends and fighting for them indicates the presence of consciousness. In the purely physical world there are no final causes. Final causes are the fruit of consciousness. The given implies no state of affairs other than itself. It is only through an evaluation of the given in light of some non-existent future state of affairs that the given state of affairs can become an intuition that motivates one to act. This envisioning of a non-existing future state as desirable is possible because consciousness is essentially that which cares. Nothing else in the physical universe has this property. Consciousness is an intentional activity and its intending is based upon its

caring. James regards this selectivity of consciousness as "one thing which it does, sua sponte, and which seems an original peculiarity of its own;...."[129]

One way in which consciousness influences behavior is by selecting what is present to the individual. The efficaciousness of consciousness is rooted in attention, and it is interests (practical, aesthetical, ethical and religious) that directs consciousness' selective attention. This selectivity based on interests is present in all conscious states. It operates in sensation, perception, conception, reasoning, belief, emotion as well as in voluntary action. This continuous selectivity of consciousness based on its interests is possible because consciousness is primarily a caring process. Choosing occurs always in terms of what is regarded as valuable, i.e. what is cared for. This means that if an essential trait of thought is its selectivity, another primordial trait must be that it cares. Care is what the present pulse of subjectivity always is. For James consciousness is caring. Here lies the basis for Andrew Reck's correct observation that for James will is the generic form of all the specific modes of consciousness - attention, conception, etc.[130]

What does consciousness care for? The answer to this question is that it cares for certain of its objects and through this care these objects become its objective self.

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[129]James, "Are We Automata?" Mind, 4 (1879), p. 9.

[130]Andrew Reck, op. cit., p. 307.

Consciousness cares for its "ME." To be more precise, the "I" cares for its "ME" for the present pulse of consciousness in caring is already functioning as the "I." It is this caring feature of the present pulse of consciousness which makes of it an "I," that is without care there would be only an anonymous stream of experience.

There are many things which interest consciousness and which it selects to focus its attention on, but these are not all things which consciousness cares for and for which it has an intense and enduring interest. In other words, not every object that consciousness entertains becomes an element of its "ME." Nevertheless, all that is interesting to consciousness is so through its relation to what consciousness cares for. In other words, the basis of all selectivity by consciousness is care. In point of fact consciousness cares for the body and those things that are intimately related to the body, and together these objects form the entire objective self. If consciousness didn't care in this way, the body, and with it consciousness, would soon cease to exist. James writes,

> Unless our consciousness was something more than cognitive, unless it experienced a partiality for certain of the objects, which, in succession, occupy its ken, it could not long maintain itself in existence....[131]

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[131] James, Psychology, Briefer Course, p. 193.

Although the present pulse of consciousness feels its own immediate existence, it has no knowledge-about itself and thus what it cares for at the moment is not itself but rather certain of its objects. In caring for these objects, it creates a "ME" and sustains itself in existence as an "I." Although past segments of consciousness can be made into an object of care, the present pulse of consciousness does not have to be made into an object of care for it to be our own for the self exist and lives through this process of caring.

James believes that each object that forms a part of the self does so through the medium of care. He holds that this is true even of that special object called the body. Through care, one's body is part of one's very self. Caring is what personalizes the body. According to James one doesn't care for one's body because he identifies with it, but rather he identifies with it "because he loves it."[132] Our bodies lie in our objective field -- "they are simply the most interesting percepts there."[133] He notes that what happens to our bodies causes in us emotions and tendencies to action that are more habitual and energetic than any which are excited by any other objects. Although the body always tends to be an object of care, James insist that what is the target of the caring act is not determined a priori but is solely a question of fact. He writes,

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[132] James, Principles, I, p. 304.

[133] Ibid.

> The phenomenon of passion is in origin and essence the same, whatever be the target upon which it is discharged; and what the target actually happens to be is solely a question of fact. I might conceivably be as much fascinated, and as primitively so, by the care of my neighbor's body as by the care of my own.[134]

In treating the self as a dialectic of caring and cared-for, James is in a sense anticipating Heidegger's notion of Sorge. In Being and Time, Heidegger argued that the being of the individual was care. For Heidegger this care referred mainly to the unique temporality of the self. For Heidegger the self exists by projecting a future in the present in light of its past. The same is true of the Jamesian self. The same temporal structure can be seen in James' notion of the "specious present" in which all three dimensions of time find a place.

Consciousness in caring changes the given into a motive or situation by its ability to evaluate the given in terms of some end that does yet exist and which is cared for. Action has its basis always in the caring of consciousness. Thus, human action from birth to death has its source in the process of care which consciousness primarily is.

There is an ancient Latin fable which Heidegger quotes to show that there has always existed a primitive understanding of human existence as a process of care. I think the fable is even more relevant to the Jamesian theory of self that we are exploring. For this reason, I will quote it at length.

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[134] Ibid., I, p. 309.

> Once when 'Care' was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. 'Care' asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While 'Care' and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: 'Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you Earth have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, she shall posess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called 'homo,' for it is made out of humus (earth).[135]

The most significant line in the fable is: "But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives." Note that even in the fable's traditional way of taking man as a compound of body and soul the priority of care is recognized. Caring is what forms the self and it is what personalizes both body and mind. To exist as a self is to care about one's objective mode of being. For James, as for Heidegger, the self is that being whose very being is an issue. A bare logical thinker inside an extended mass of flesh would be selfless and not entitled to the name person.

The fable can be interpreted as suggesting that there are three levels involved in the being of a person: the material, the organic, and the personal. With each level

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[135]Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, tr. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (SCM Press, London, 1962), p. 242.

something entirely new comes into existence. The personal is not reducible to the material or the organic. In the fable if we let spirit signify the life principle, it represents the organic level, and earth represents the material level. These levels by themselves can't be regarded as forming a self, for care is needed for this. Care is what forms and constantly sustains or changes the self. Care is the mark of personhood. Only with care is there a transcendence of the mere organic level.

People generally treat care as the mark of personhood even though they might not be reflectively aware of doing so. When the computer in the movie 2001 began acting as if it really cared for its own continued existence, the audience began viewing this computer as a person, as an end unto itself and no mere machine. Although this is a fictitious example, it does illustrate the importance of the presence of care in deciding if something is a person. With the advance of computer technology and the growing possibility of contact with alien beings, it may become necessary to develop some criteria for determining personhood that is not tied to the human anatomy. The presence of the process of caring, I submit, ought to play an essential role in deciding the issue of personhood in the event of such puzzle cases.

James pointed out in his famous automatic sweetheart argument that robots could never be sweethearts no matter how much their behavior was like real sweethearts. In the case

of sweethearts, it is not the behavior itself that is valued, but rather the care that one assumes lies behind the behavior. What is true of sweethearts is true of all selves. The presence of care is required for both. A robot not only won't do as a sweetheart, it won't do as a person, for a self requires a stream of consciousness that is essentially a process of care.

PART SIX

THE CONCRETE FULL SELF

The concrete full self is a subjective-objective temporal process. It exists as a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity and we shall call it, Self-Constituting-Historical-Existence. It is the only real self there is. Personal existence entails a continuous mutual influence between the self's subjective and objective dimensions. We will first examine the influence of the subjective dimension upon the objective dimension, and then we will show how the objective dimension in turn affects the subjective dimension. We will then explore reasons why the self's mode of existence must be that of an irreducible temporal process involving the mutual relationship of these dimensions. Finally, we will discuss the type of identity that this self is capable of having.

A. THE SPONTANEITY OF CARE AND THE CONTINUOUS CONSTITUTION OF THE ME, I ⟶ ME

We have already touched upon the constitution of the "ME." We must now explore this process in greater detail. By caring for certain of its objects, the present "I" constitutes a "ME." One's total self is what one cares about, and it is the present pulse of consciousness that does the caring. Through care it selects which objects are to form the "ME."

As noted above, no object is in and of itself personalized. All that belongs to the field of the "ME" does so through the medium of care. The "ME" is not some one specific item which is the same for all individuals but is instead whatever is an object of special interest to consciousness, i.e. the subjective dimension of the self. Through care the subjective dimension of the self creates and sustains the ME, i.e. objective dimension of the self.

"This sort of interest is really the meaning of the word 'my'," writes James, "Whatever has it is *eo ipso* a part of me."[136] He points out that this field of care may grow and alter its boundaries in countless ways.[137] At the heart of this field of care invariably lies the body and what

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[136] William James, *Principles*, I, p. 308.

[137] *Ibid.*

ministers to its needs. Other objects tend to get knitted on to this core of selfhood through care. All the objects of the material, spiritual and social areas of one's "ME" are cared for by consciousness. This is the condition for the personalization of these diverse objects. The entire objective dimension of the self is a field of care, and this field is created and sustained through the acts of care of the subjective dimension of the self.

Certain kinds of objects tend to become part of one's objective self. James believes, however, that any object can be a candidate for personalization through care. What is the target of care is solely a question of fact.[138]

This position with regards to one's objective self has the merit of allowing for the possibility of change. The "ME" is mutable. Growth and decay are possibilities of the objective dimension of the self. It is as James said "a fluctuating material." One's "ME" of ten years ago is probably not identical with one's present "ME." If there is a difference between my present "ME" and my "ME" of a decade ago, the difference stems from the fact that my consciousness no longer cares for the same objects in the same way after a passage of ten years. Many of the items that we cherished as children no longer stir the same emotion in us. A prized doll for example is likely to fade away from one's self-field

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[138] Ibid. I, p. 309.

with the approach of adulthood. These alterations in one's caring attitude means changes in the "ME," and these changes may be grave or slight. "Thus the identity found by the I in its me," says James, "is only a loosely constructed thing, an identity 'on the whole,' just like that which any outside observer might find in the same assemblage of facts."[139]

With the passage of time various objects are added and dropped from one's self field. Care is the means of entry for these objects into the self-field. Those objects that continue to remain within the self-field do so because they are sustained by care. This present manuscript that I am now working on forms a part of my objective self. It is as James would say, "saturated with my labor," and I care for it. Years from now or perhaps even tomorrow, I may cease to be fascinated with this project, and it may slip away from my field of care and be no longer a part of the objective dimension of my self. I am always capable at any moment of choosing a new mode of existence, i.e. of adopting a new self through a transformation in care. James felt that such sudden conversions were rare, but he didn't doubt that they really occurred. In The Varieties of Religious Experiences he discusses the phenomenon of sudden conversion at length. Long term conversions are, however, more familiar to us. One of the goals of higher education is in fact to bring

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[139] Ibid. I, p. 352.

about such long term conversions. If a new college graduate feels that he is the exact same person that he was four years ago, then the chances are that this institution did not serve him well. If, however, he feels that he is a different person, he feels this way because he recognizes the fact that he now has all sorts of new interests, i.e. his field of care has been transformed. New objects of care have been added and others dropped from his self-field. What we have here is a fluctuating field of care in which the same object being once treated as a part of me is now regarded, "as if I had nothing to do with it at all."[140]

At class reunions one may find that it is difficult to renew the same old friendships. The difficulty here stems from the fact that the selves involved have not remained fixed and frozen during the intervening years. Your old pal may not have simply gone bald and put on weight; he may have also undergone a transformation in his very self. Your old school friend may now have a whole new set of values and care quite differently about things then he once did, and to the extent that this is so and to just that extent, he is a changed self.

One's "ME" is something that is created and conserved by care. When an item belonging to the "ME" ceases to be cherished by consciousness, this object ceases to form a part

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[140] Ibid. I, p. 279.

of the "ME." A spouse, for example, may form a part of one's "ME" but not so if the caring ceases. If a divorce is emotionally traumatic for an individual, it is often because one is experiencing a partial loss of one's very self. In such situations a reorganization of one's objective self tends to occur. As a result, during such times one's sense of self is in a highly confused state. In other words, in such situations of sudden alteration in one's life one is not certain about what to value or care for, and as a result the self's own boundaries become vague. James writes,

> Sudden alterations in outward fortune often produce such a change in the empirical me as almost to amount to a pathological disturbance of self-consciousness. When a poor man draws the big prize in a lottery, or unexpectedly inherits an estate; when a man high in fame is publicly disgraced, a millionaire becomes a pauper, or a loving husband and father sees his family perish at one fell swoop, there is temporarily such a rupture between all past habits, whether of an active or a passive kind, and the exigencies and possibilities of the new situation, that the individual may find no medium of continuity or association to carry him over from the one phase to the other of his life. Under these conditions mental derangement is no infrequent result.[141]

The specific form of one's "ME" is a function of the caring selectivity of one's consciousness. One's "ME" has a certain form because consciousness cares for only certain of the objects it entertains. The body that one constantly

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[141] Ibid. I, pp. 357-358 n.

feels, i.e. one's lived-body, seems invariably to be the first and main object of this care. Around this privileged object the entire objective self is built up with its material, social, and spiritual areas. All the objects in the entire self-field are cared for by consciousness, and all are in some way related to one's body. "The nucleus of the '<u>me</u>'," says James, "is always the bodily existence felt to be present at the time."[142]

The material, social and spiritual areas of one's "ME" are all formed in the same manner, i.e. through the process of care. A particular attitude, a beardless and flabby body, a brown suit and a woman named Shirley are all presently a part of my objective self but only because they are all cared for by my present subjective dimemsion. Some of these items may always be a part of my self-field, but if they are, it is because they are sustained in this field by care. Some time in the future I may forget that special attitude, grow a beard, get in shape, throw away my brown suit, and forsake the woman named Shirley. If there is stability in the self, it is because changes like this usually don't all occur at once but gradually over a long period of time. "Any man becomes, as we say, inconsistent with himself if he forgets his engagements, pledges, knowledges, and habits;" says James, "and it is merely a question of degree at what point

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[142] <u>Ibid.</u> I, p. 378.

we shall say that his personality is changed."[143]

Let us now examine how care functions in the constitution of each of the three areas of one's "ME": material, spiritual, and social. In the case of the material "ME" the physical body is dominant. Other material objects that are related to the body tend to become also a part of one's material "ME" because they are cared for in the same way. This is the case with one's family, clothes, property and creations. One's body may seem like a natural part of the "ME" and these others may seem like artificial extensions, but James does not believe that this is the case. Each is part of the "ME" by virtue of the same fact, it is cared for by consciousness. In and of itself the physiological body is simply an extended physical mass and totally non-personal. The importance of the role of care in selfhood is revealed by how quickly we regard as foreign that which was once a very part of our physical body. When the barber cuts our hair and we see it lying on the floor, we no longer view it as we once did when it rested atop our head. In Becoming, Gordon Allport points out that we don't think twice about swallowing our own saliva but if we were asked to spit into a cup and then swallow it, we would find it to be a different matter altogether.[144] It is different despite the fact that the

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[143] Ibid. I, p. 358.

[144] Gordon Allport, Becoming, (London: Yale University Press 1955), p. 43.

same physical substance is present in both cases. What was once felt as warm and intimate is now regarded as foreign and repulsive. Allport's example illustrates the fact that it is not merely the nature of an object that determines whether it is a part of one's self. What is more important for entry into the self-field is how the object is grasped by consciousness: with or without care. James believes that this is why there have been men throughout history who "have been ready to disown their very bodies and to regard them as mere vestures, or even as prisons of clay from which they should some day be glad to escape."[145]

James' observation here reminds me of the words of a dear friend whose life was cut short by multiple sclerosis. The words were her last words. In her will she wrote that she wanted that "awful thing set ablaze." That "awful thing" was her body which turned against her in the prime of her life and from which she too wished to escape. I suspect that at the time of her death her own sense of self no longer included those physiological parts over which she no longer had control.

One's material goods also tend to form a part of one's objective self. When one cares for his riches to a great extent, they too become a part of one's very sense of self. I suspect that after the stockmarket crash of 1929 a number

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[145]James, Principles, I, p. 279.

of people committed suicide not because of fear of starvation but rather because of a loss of their wealth. Care for one's material belongings can become so intense that one's very identity becomes wrapped up in them. A friend of mine once came to me with a gloomy face and told me that he had been "disfigured." I then learned that his brand new car had been sideswiped. The man's remark was rooted in a true sense of self-loss which he was experiencing. In such situations one tends to feel a shrinkage of one's very self. On occasion, each of us in varying degrees experiences a sense of self-loss with regard to our material goods that we lose or see destroyed. I once believed that I had lost forever a part of this very manuscript on a commuter train. In the hours it took to recover my paper, I experienced a real sense of self diminishment. Such experiences illustrate the fact that the self is a field that greatly transcends the boundaries of one's body. If this were not the case, we would not feel "a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness" when we lose these goods that we cherish.[146] This is why James feels that one's property becomes, "with different degrees of intimacy, parts of our empirical selves."[147]

Care is also the common ingredient with regard to the elements of one's spiritual "ME." One's past subjective acts

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[146] Ibid. I, p. 281.

[147] Ibid.

(perceptions, volitions, emotions, etc.) form a part of one's objective self through care. When the care fades for these past acts of subjectivity, they cease to be an intimate part of one's objective self. For example, the feelings one had as a child often seem when they are recalled years later to lack the warmth of recent feelings. They appear to the present subjective dimension as foreign. Since they are no longer cared for by consciousness, they are no longer regarded as a part of the same "ME." "My spiritual powers, again, must interest me more than those of other people, and for the same reason" says James. "I should not be here at all unless I had cultivated them and kept them from decay."[148]

It is also care that creates and sustains one's social "ME." Not all the images that we think others have of us form a part of our social self. It is only those images that one cares for that manage to be assimilated into one's objective self. I might, for example, be aware of the fact that certain individuals regard me as a poor golfer, but unless I cherish this particular image and value the approval of this golf group, their opinion has no bearing on my social me. As James pointed out, it's what image we care about, what we stake ourselves to be, that matters most. Concerning

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[148] Ibid. I, p. 308.

this point James reveals the following about his own social self:

> I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all. Had I 'pretensions' to be a linguist, it would have been just the reverse.[149]

Against this view it might be argued that a man is the social roles he plays whether he cares for them or not. A person might be in a profession he no longer likes, but he is still defined by this role and how well he performs it. In response to this, it can be said that a person may lose interest in his profession but still care about how others regard his performance in this profession and so still care about this particular social image. If this kind of regard is also lacking, it can be truly said that he is so isolated from his labor that his work really forms no part of his social "ME." Such cases, I suspect, are quite rare, but where they do exist they illustrate that it is not simply the roles we play but rather the roles we perform and care about that form our social "ME." James maintains that one has only as many different social selves as there are "distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares."[150] As in the case of one's material and spiritual "ME", it is care that constitutes one's social "ME."

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[149] Ibid. I, p. 296.

[150] Ibid. I, p. 282.

So we see that all three areas of one's "ME" are constituted through care. The material, spiritual and social aspects of one's ME require a caring consciousness for their creation and conservation in existence. It is a caring consciousness which divides the universe into "two halves" which James notes we all call by the same names, "and those names are 'me' and 'not me'."[151]

The care which forms the objective dimension of the self is a function of consciousness, i.e. the subjective dimension of the self. Consciousness is basically a process of care. It is consciousness that establishes ends for the individual and through its selective character, chooses means to those ends. The term interest implies consciousness, and all interests that are commonly attributed to the organism including survival are really the interests of a particular consciousness. Without consciousness, normative judgements like "right reaction" are meaningless. The purely physical order of existence is completely lacking in goals or ends. "Matter has no ideals," says James. "It must be entirely indifferent to the molecules C, H, N, and O, whether they combine in a live body or a dead one."[152]

Caring is not a function of matter but of consciousness. Ends and goals imply care, and care implies consciousness.

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[151] Ibid. I, p. 278.

[152] James, "Are We Automata," Mind 4(1879): 1 p. 6.

"Every actually existing consciousness seems to itself at any rate to be a fighter for ends," says James, "but for its presence, [there] would be no ends at all."[153]

Consciousness freely cares for certain of its objects. This is what we mean by the spontaneity of care. We are not suggesting, however, that consciousness acts arbitrarily in its caring. Consciousness is not coerced into caring for anything, but it is influenced by the present situation it finds itself in and by its previous acts of care. Unless this process of care was so motivated there would be very little continuity to selfhood. Thus besides the spontaneity of care, we have also a sedimentation of care. One's past acts of care influence the direction taken by the present pulse of care. Because of the continuous acts of appropriation, the present segment of consciousness has its past objective self as part of its content. This historical content along with the present given situation affects how the present active pulse of consciousness constitutes its "ME." This constitution always entails varying degrees of sedimentation and spontaneity. The given environment and one's past do not act deterministically for the present active pulse of consciousness interprets and regulates the influence of both.

This section has tried to establish that for James the

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[153] Ibid. pp. 6-7.

objective dimension of the self is constructed through care, i.e. the activity of the subjective dimension of the self. We can symbolize this process in the following manner: I⟶ME. In the next section we will be exploring the influence one's past objective self upon the present active part of the self. We can symbolize this process in the following manner: I⟵ME. We will discover later on that these are not two separate processes but rather two phases of the same temporal process which the self is.

B. THE SEDIMENTATION OF CARE AND THE CONTINUOUS SUBLIMINAL INFLUENCE OF THE PAST "ME," I←—ME

In the Jamesian theory of consciousness, one's past exerts an on-going influence on one's present existence. Consciousness is accumulative, for in the act of appropriation the present pulse appropriates the past pulse and all that it had appropriated. In this way one's past is carried along into the present. This view of consciousness is not as counter-intuitive as it might first appear. James is not claiming here that we recall our entire past each and every moment. He is pointing out rather the often ignored fact that our past is continuously influencing our present consciousness without the need of any explicit act of memory. Our past experiences are available for explicit recall because they already form the fringe of our present consciousness. From the fringe, my past objective self can influence the direction of my present active consciousness without ever becoming focal. In this manner the "I" comes under the influence of the "ME."

The following may serve as an illustration of James' position here. When one takes up bicycling as an adult, one may explicitly recall having ridden a bicycle as a child and compare the two experiences. It is clear, however, that prior to any explicit recollection those past experiences must be already operative informing my present activity. If

this were not the case, I would have to relearn how to ride a bicycle, but I find this relearning isn't necessary. When I do recollect my childhood experiences with a bicycle, I recognize their bearing on what I am now already doing, i.e. my adult bicycling.

Nearly all our intentional actions are made possible by the fact that our past lies available for us in the present. When we talk, we don't have to recall our learning of each of our spoken words. Our entire vocabulary is available to us as the fringe of our present consciousness, and this sedimentation of language helps guide its direction. The same is true of all our skills such as swimming, typing, walking, etc. As I write this manuscript, my entire past studies of James are being brought to bear upon my current action. This is not all, however, for my entire past philosophical studies are also operative here, as well as my knowledge of the English language. In fact, much more of my past than I realize is presently influencing the work I am now engaged in. The same can be said of all purposeful activity. James writes,

> In the pulse of inner life immediately present now in each of us is a little awareness of our own body, of each other's persons, of these sublimities we are trying to talk about, of the earth's geography and the direction of history, of truth and error, of good and bad, and of who knows how much more? Feeling, however dimly and subconsciously, all these things, your pulse of inner life is continuous with them, belongs to them and they to it.[154]

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[154]James, A Pluralistic Universe, p. 129.

How one's past lives on as the fringe of one's present consciousness is not easy to conceptualize. Yet, it is clear that the facts of everyday experience suggest that this is the case. Each experience that we have is felt as either familiar or strange and this suggest that we are not isolated from our past but rather bring it with us and evaluate the present in terms of it. This is not explicit memory. Explicit memory is mainly a matter of bringing to the center of consciousness what was previously only on its fringe. Past experience affects us without the need of conscious recall. Without being brought to center stage, while remaining in the wings, one's past is able to exert its influence upon the present active part of the self. Each new pulse of consciousness thus comes inheriting a specific past whose influence it feels.

James illustrates the influence of this temporal fringe by examining the phenomenon of trying to recall a particular word. He notes that in one's effort to recall a word one is able to reject possible candidates for the word one is trying to recall. One would not be able to do this if the word or at least an approximate feeling of the word were not already a part of the fringe of one's present consciousness assisting him in his effort at its explicit recall. One's mental void in trying to recall one word is not the same when trying to recall a different word. The difference lies in what forms the fringe of the present consciousness. This is an example

of how one's past can affect one's present active self prior to any explicit recall. James writes,

> And the gap of one word does not feel like the gap of another, all empty of content as both might seem necessarily to be when described as gaps. When I vainly try to recall the name of Spalding, my consciousness is far removed from what it is when I vainly try to recall the name of Bowles.[155]

Continuous appropriation by each new pulse of consciousness of the previous pulse of consciousness creates in effect a single unbroken stream of consciousness. Consciousness is continuous and accumulative through appropriation. Each pulse of consciousness becomes a temporal segment of a single stream of consciousness. It is this fact that makes possible the temporal fringe described above, allowing a past to be brought to bear on a present. James writes,

> In principle, then, the real units of our immediately-felt life are unlike the units that intellectualists logic holds to and makes its calculations with. They are not separate from their own others, and you have to take them at widely separated dates to find any two of them that seem unblent.... All real units of experience overlap.[156]

James did not believe in the existence of an entity

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[155]James, Principles, I, p. 243.

[156]James, A Pluralistic Universe, pp. 129-130.

called the unconscious. His notion of the fringe of consciousness, however, functions in a similar manner in that through it one's past is silently and ceaselessly exerting its influence on the present active self. The active center of consciousness is affected in a special way by what lies on its margin. James writes,

> My present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more. ... The centre works in one way while the margins work in another, and presently overpower the centre and are central themselves. What we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze.[157]

In his article "The Hidden Self" James discusses the influence of the marginal areas of one's consciousness that are dramatically revealed in case of post hypnotic suggestion. Here he refers to the past temporal fringe of consciousness as "the submerged consciousness." James writes,

> Ordinary hypnotic suggestion is proving itself immensely fertile in the therapeutic field; and the subtler knowledge of sub-conscious states which we are now gaining will certainly increase our powers in this direction many fold. Who knows how many pathological states (not simply nervous and functional ones, but organic ones too) may be due to the existence of some perverse buried fragment of consciousness obstinately nourishing its narrow

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[157] Ibid., p. 130.

> memory or delusion, and thereby inhibiting the normal flow of life.[158]

Many of the phenomena associated with the notion of the unconscious James examined in The Varieties of Religious Experience. Here he comes to the conclusion that the term "unconscious" is a misnomer and is better replaced by the term "subliminal."[159] Our past doesn't lie locked away in some entity called the unconscious but forms instead the fringe or margin of our present consciousness.

> The important fact which the 'field' formula commemorates is the indetermination of the margin. Inattentively realized as is the matter which the margin contains, it is nevertheless there, and helps both to guide our behavior and to determine the next movement of our attention. It lies around us like a 'magnetic field,' inside of which our centre of energy turns like a compass-needle, as the present phase of consciousness alters into its successor. Our whole past store of memories floats beyond this margin, ready at a touch to come in; and the entire mass of residual powers, impulses, and knowledges that constitute our empirical self stretches continuously beyond it.[160]

The "I" continuously feels the influence of its past objective selfhood. It constitutes its present "ME" for the

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[158] James, "The Hidden Self," Scribners Magazine Vol. VII pp. 361-373 included in A William James Reader, ed. by Gay Wilson Allen, p. 106.

[159] James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 170.

[160] Ibid., p. 187.

most part in conformity with this influence. In practice the constitution by the present "I" is almost always a matter of sustaining one's past "ME" rather than selecting a whole new "ME." In principle, however, nothing prevents the "I" from embracing an entirely fresh objective self. One tends, however, to continue to care for the same body, clothes, emotions and social images that one has cherished in the past. One tends to act in character because one's past character traits maintain their influence while forming the fringe of our present active consciousness.

The temporality of consciousness with its past and future fringes means the self enjoys more than a momentary existence. All three dimensions of time are involved in the being of the self. The self always experiences what it is about to become as the future of its present existence. One's future intentions form a part of one's being right here and now. I am always a being towards some future goal and this is a feature of my present self. James believes that I am not only my past but also what I stake myself to be. One's future possibilities reveal themselves as possibilities of sustaining or changing one's own past. One's past is carried forward into each moment of one's existence. If as they say, one's character is one's fate, it is so because there is no gap separating our present active self from our past. Personal existence always involves a projection of a future in the present in light of a past. We are historical

beings because the self is intrinsically historical. That which is selfless is not really historical. A tree has its rings but they no longer exert any active influence. An accumulative consciousness through continuous appropriation makes possible the historical nature of the self. Like one's vocabulary on the horizon of one's present active consciousness there lies also one's past objective selfhood. This sedimentation of existence influences what the present consciousness is going to care for, i.e. it helps in the formation of the present "ME." Because of this we do not have to start from nothingness each moment in determining the manner of our existence. To a great degree and through a certain amount of inertia on our part, we tend to sustain our past objective self. Nonetheless, our objective self always tends to involve some degree of novelty and is at no time a completely stable and static field. This is due in part to the fact that one's utilized past is always an intrepreted past of a consciousness that is primarily concerned with the future of one's present self.

Differences in one's past experiences and one's future expectations causes the world of one person to differ from that of another. Each of us brings his unique past to bear upon what he is now experiencing. My lived-present includes all that now makes my present experience what it is. I am constantly utilizing my past prior to any explicit recall of it. This is why it is impossible for two people to read

exactly the same novel. The experience that is had in reading a novel is in no small part due to what the reader himself brings to this experience. As Sartre once pointed out the images and expectations that each page conjures up in the mind of a reader is determined in part by the reader's past rather than solely by the novelist's words. One's present subjectivity is always functioning under the guidance of one's past objective selfhood.

This section has tried to establish the fact that my present subjectivity is influenced by my past objective self. We can symbolize this process in the following manner: I⟵ME. So represented this process appears as the antithesis of the process that we began our discussion with in this section: I⟶ME. In what follows we shall see that we have not two opposite processes but rather a single process that can be analyzed into two phases. This single dynamic process, which is the Jamesian self, can be symbolized as follows: I⟺ME.

C. THE FULL SELF AS SELF-CONSTITUTING-HISTORICAL-EXISTENCE, I⟺ME

According to James the concrete full self is partly object and partly subject. He calls it a "duplex,"[161] but he does not mean the self is composed of two separate things. He means rather that the self in being partly known and partly knower is something which involves more than one dimension or aspect. The self is that which has both an "I" and a "ME" dimension to it. These aspects of the self have no independent existence. They refer to each other and exist only in union. James writes,

> I call these 'discriminated aspects,' and not separate things, because the identity of the I with me, even in the very act of discrimination, is perhaps the most ineradicable dictum of commonsense,...[162]

In previous sections we have explored the nature of the objective and subjective dimensions of the self and in this section we have already treated the interrelationship of these dimensions. We are now in a position to understand why the self must be viewed as a subjective-objective temporal process taken as an irreducible whole. This Jamesian self can be represented symbolically as follows: I⟺ME.

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[161] James, Psychology, Briefer Course, p. 176.

[162] Ibid.

Neither of the dimensions of the self can exist without the other, for caring implies a cared-for and vice versa. The present pulse of consciousness is personalized and functions as the "I" because it is part of a continuous process of care. Consciousness cares for certain of its objects and it is due to this care that these objects come to compose its ME. Each dimension of the self thus implies the existence of the other. The "I" and the "ME" are like abstractions in that they exist only in union. The self exists as a temporal process involving these dimensions and their interrelationship. Wherever there exists a self, there exists a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity ($I \leftrightharpoons ME$) for this is what personal existence necessarily entails.

Richard Stevens recognizes this "dialectic" feature of the Jamesian self. Unlike myself, however, he interprets it in Husserlian terms. He writes, "James's distinction between the "I" and the empirical "ME" parallels Husserl's distinction between the pure phenomenological ego and the human ego."[163] From James' hostile treatment of Kant's transcendental ego, it is clear to me that James would not look too favorably upon Stevens interpretation of the subjective dimension of the Jamesian self. Unlike Husserl's transcendental ego James' "I" is always a dimension of a concrete empirical self that is totally immersed in the world

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[163] Richard Stevens, James and Husserl: The Foundations of Meaning, Martinus Mijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands, 1974, p. 178.

as an individual agent.

For James, "Self" is a term that implies not only a concrete individual thing but also an agent. P. F. Strawson has pointed out that our concept of person seems to be a primitive and irreducible concept which nonetheless involves the notions of agency and individuality.[164] This view is related to James' position which holds that the self is necessarily two dimensional. There is the agent aspect of the self, the "I" and there is the individuality aspect of the self, the "ME." James believes that a self necessarily involves,

> ...a stream of thought, each part of which as 'I' can (1) remember those which went before, and know the things they knew; and (2) emphasize and care paramountly for certain ones among them as 'me' and appropriate to these the rest.[165]

James' distinction within the self between the "I" and the "ME" can be described in a number of ways: the I is the owner and the ME is the owned; or the I is the enduring subject and the ME is that which changes; or the I is the subject of responsibility and of praise and blame, and the ME is that for which I is responsible and is praised or blamed. The best way to describe the distinction, however, is that the I is the active caring dimension of the self and the ME

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[164] P. F. Strawson, Individuals, London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1959.

[165] James, Principles, I, p. 378.

is the objects and events ordered or classified into a self by this caring.

Each of the above descriptions has the merit of taking into account the real ambiguous nature of the self. Our ambiguous existence must not be falsified in order so we can easily deal with it like any ordinary object of consciousness. To take for example either of the dimensions of the self and claim that this is what the self is, is to totally misrepresent the self. To take the ME as exclusively the real self is to remove agency from the notion of the self, thus rendering all human action nonpersonal. To take the I, the perishing pulse of subjectivity, as exclusively the real self is to empty it of objective historical content and so individuality is lost. At times it may be convenient and perhaps necessary to treat the self as if it were a thing, but we mustn't forget that this is a distortion of personal existence. A self is not a thing but is rather an individual agent and as such its existence is intrinsically two dimensional and so ambiguous. James writes,

> We may sum up by saying personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, an objective person, known by a passing subjective thought and recognized as continuing in time. Hereafter let us use the words ME and I for the empirical person and the judging thought.[166]

To speak of agency and individuality with regards to the

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[166] Ibid. I, p. 350.

self is to speak of its spontaneity and sedimentation. The self is neither pure spontaneity nor pure sedimentation. It is a mixture of both. I am free but I am not absolutely free for there is a sedimentation to my existence. The mode of existence of the self is that of a projecting of a future in the present in light of its past. The self is that mixture of sedimentation and spontaneity that each of us discovers when he reflects upon his own existence. Most of us feel that we are autonomous and yet we recognize that we are also to a great extent creatures of habit.

Despite the momentary existence of the present pulse of consciousness, the self does not have a momentary existence. Each I perishes quickly and one's ME also changes. The self is, however, not just a particular I nor just a particular ME. The self is rather this entire on-going process which I call "self-constituting-historical-existence." A self is not just the present caring subjectivity and it is not just the present objective field of care. It is quite clearly both. The self is not simply a collection of static personality traits nor is it a pure ego. The self is rather a free agent that already has a specific character. It is a freedom with a past to which it listens but to which it is not absolutely bound. In fact, this "listening" is one of the ways it avoids being bound to the past. The self always finds itself already moving in a particular direction but it has no fixed destiny.

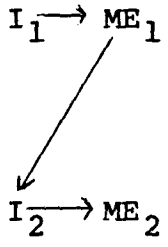
I am what I have been but I am also what I am intending to be and what I am currently. Personal existence always involves all three dimensions of the time. There is always the present "I" projecting a future "ME" in light of its past "ME." The future "ME" and the past "ME" are all part of the objective dimension of the self. The subjective dimension exists only in the present, and it determines the degree of influence on one's past objective self on one's future objective self.

The activity that I am presently engaged in can serve as an example of what I mean when I say that the self always involves all three dimensions of time. The work that I am now doing has a reference to both my past and my future. With regard to my past, my present labor on this manuscript leans on all those years of my philosophical studies. With regard to my future, my present labor is in no small way aimed at securing for me a future career in philosophy. Isolated from my past "ME" and my future projected "ME," my present self and its activity is unthinkable. The same is true of each moment of my personal existence for the self is always projecting a future in the present in light of its past.

The temporality of the self is made possible by the fact that each present pulse of consciousness involves a temporal fringe that includes both an appropriated past and an anticipated future. It is due to this lived-present that the

"I" is able to project a "ME" which it views as the future of its past "ME."

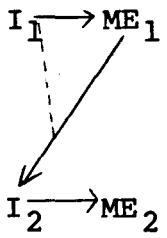
This process which the self is can be signified the following way: I⟺ME. The process is, however, more complicated than this formula might suggest. This formula does serve, however, to indicate that the subjective dimension affects the objective dimension and vice versa. If, however, we were to symbolically represent the process of selfhood in a way that more accurately reflects the flux of consciousness it would be as follows:



Each new I constitutes a ME under the influence of a past ME which in turn was constituted under the influence of a previous ME. This chain of influence stretches back in time indefinitely through one's personal history.

The above description is still not a complete portrayal of the subjective-objective temporal process which is the self. It isn't complete because it doesn't convey the fact that each new I not only appropriates the former ME but also the former I. The former I is appropriated and becomes available to reflection as if it was an objective element of the spiritual ME. This is the only manner in which past acts of subjectivity manifest themselves. When we take this

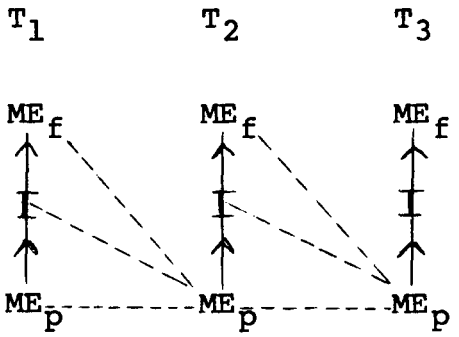
factor into account, a symbolic representation of the self looks like the following:



The dotted line indicates that the previous pulse of subjectivity is available to the present pulse of subjectivity as if it were an object and a part of one's spiritual ME.

I⟺ME, is thus a way of representing in a simplified way a rather complex process. In chemistry complex chemical processes are often represented in a formula in such a way that only the basic steps of the process are clear. Here we are doing the same. The formula displays the main facts of selfhood but not all the facts.

The self can also be represented in terms of its temporality in the following manner.



T_1, T_2 and T_3 refer to three different temporal segments of the stream of consciousness. The dotted lines

refer to the act of appropriation by which a present pulse of thought appropriates its predecessor along with its objects. The vertical lines with their arrows indicate how the appropriated past ME affects how the present I projects a future ME. This diagram of the self has the merit of displaying the fact that the self exists every moment as a dialectic not only of subjectivity and objectivity but also as a synthesis of past, present and future.[167] One's past and future exist in the present as intentional objects of consciousness.

As the above diagram indicates, the self is a subjective-objective temporal process. It is an historical process that is to a certain extent self determining for it involves both sedimentation and spontaneity. All three phases of time come together in the self. This Jamesian view of the self accurately portrays the fundamental ambiguity involved in human existence. The self is no mere object of consciousness, to treat it so is to ignore the fact that consciousness itself is an aspect of the self. To treat the self as a thing means missing its spontaneity and temporality. As James makes clear, the self is neither purely subjective nor purely objective. Its existence is intrinsically ambiguous for its unique mode of existence is to be both subjective and objective at the same time.

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[167]This diagram has the merit of offering the detail factors left out of James' own diagram depicting the self's temporality. See Principles I, p. 324.

A self has a developing essence. Sartre once pointed out that in the case of man a fixed essence only comes with death. In actuality a self never attains a fixed essence for with death there is no longer a self to which to attribute an essence. If the self has an evolving essence, the evolving must itself always form a part of its essence. This means that the self is forever two dimensional, always involving both sedimentation and spontaneity. When this fact is neglected in any investigation of the self, one is no longer dealing with a self. One does not grasp the self by grasping one of its dimensions. One can not totally objectify the self because it is that which is more than objective. On this point Kierkegard was correct. Any attempt to reduce the subjectivity of the self to anything else but itself, is to lose the self altogether. Not unlike the falling snowflake that one grasps in vain to examine its intricate structure, the self resists being fully grasped objectively. This study has from the start refused the futile exercise of trying to reduce the subjectivity of the self to something else. We have avoided this move because it leads not to clarification of the self but to its destruction. It is time that it is realized that the ambiguous language used in talking about the self is based upon the genuine ambiguous existence that the self enjoys.

This ambiguity of the self is bound up in its temporality. With the temporal fringe of consciousness there

is a synthesis of spontaneity and sedimentation. This synthesis means the self has both a subjective and objective aspect to it. Personal existence involves not only a present pulse of subjectivity but also an objective sedimentated past and an objective intended future. The self is a subjective-objective process due to its unique temporality, i.e. the fact that its mode of existence is that of a projecting a future in the present in light of its past. This temporality in turn is based upon the fact that consciousness is essentially a process of care. Without care there is no concern for the future and so no intending a specific future under the influence of a sedimentated past. It is care that grounds the unique temporality of the self. Thus, we see that the self's ambiguity, temporality and caring quality are all related. The Jamesian self is an ambiguous, temporal, caring self.

D. THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

With respect to the issue of identity, James saw selves as being no different from other phenomena. One's character can change over a period of years. One remains the same self to the extent that one's behavior is continuous enough to be reidentified as the same self -- again and again during the period of change. This is the case because, "there is nothing more remarkable in making a judgment of sameness in the first person than in the second or the third."[168]

James avoided the difficulties of Hume with regard to personal identity because he recognized the fact that personal identity does not involve nor require the kind of absolute identity that Hume sought for it. For Hume the same cannot change, and persons change, then persons cannot remain the same, so personal identity is a myth. James regards Hume's absolute identity as something that is found nowhere in experience. James believes that every object we experience reveals itself as mutable and this also applies to the objective self. The very stream character of experience itself precludes the absolute identity that Hume sought for the self.

James believed that self-identity is a matter of comparative identity. Comparative identity allows for

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[168] *Ibid.* I, p. 315.

sameness and change to coexist. For an object to be comparatively identical, it need only be subject to reidentification despite its alterations. Selves remain comparatively identical according to James for generally they are able to remain the same despite their various changes. In the very concept of a thing there is an allowance made for certain kinds of changes without the loss of identity. To know how to use a concept of a thing is to be aware of the changes this thing can undergo and still remain the same thing. A cherry tree may grow taller each year, produce cherries in June and lose its leaves in November and still be the same cherry tree. If, however, this tree were to produce apples one June, we would regard this type of alteration as involving a loss of identity for the concept of a cherry tree does not make allowances for this kind of change.

As Terence Penelhum has pointed out, Hume's flawed account of personal identity stems from the fact that he did not recognize Locke's principle that the "same" is an incomplete term that functions only in conjunction with substantives and most substantive concepts (including that of the self) are designed to allow for certain kinds of changes.[169] For James also, sameness is to be found in our meaning intentions, i.e. it is a matter of our conceptions.

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[169]Terence Penelhum, "Personal Identity," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 6, pp. 95-107. New York: Macmillan Co. & The Free Press, 1967, p. 96.

James position is consistent with the brilliant and lucid account given by Terence Penelhum of the compatibility of identity and change in a particular sense of identity. Unfortunately they do not use the same names to stand for the two notions of identity that each compares and contrast. What Penelhum calls comparative identity James calls numerical identity and vice versa. Despite differences in terminology, they both agree that there is a type of identity that allows for change and that this is the type of identity we have in mind when we speak of personal identity. Penelhum notes that there is nothing paradoxical about ascribing both change and identity to the same subject provided we are ascribing numerical identity (or what James calls comparative identity) rather than comparative identity (or what James calls numerical identity).[170] In other words, provided it is realized that we are not prescribing Hume's absolute identity in such cases. Penelhum writes,

> There is, of course, one sense of the words "same" and "identical" in which sameness and change are incompatible. This is the sense of "same" in which, if applied to two distinct things, it means "alike" and, if applied to one thing at different times, it means "unaltered." This we might call the comparative sense of the word. It is to be distinguished from the numerical sense, in which two things said to be the same are said not to be two, but one. Clearly, one thing cannot be said to be both changed and the same if the comparative sense is intended, but this is not the sense we intend when we wonder whether we are entitled to consider someone the same throughout changes. Once this is noted, we can easily see that there is no need to assume that "to an accurate view" (Hume) an object has to be the same in the comparative sense to

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[170] Ibid. p. 99.

> remain the same in the numerical sense. If this is missed, a sense of paradox will be only too easy to sustain.[171]

Like Penelhum, James approaches the problem of personal identity quite differently than Hume. First of all, James did not make the Humean mistake of ignoring the role of the body in personal identity. The problem of self-identity James realized, unlike Hume, is not the same problem as the identity of mind. Furthermore, James does not believe that the concept of personal identity must precede and guide the development of our concept of self. He sees no good reason why an account of the self ought to be shaped by an account of personal identity rather than vice-versa. It seems more logical to James to have an account of personal identity shaped by an account of self for the self is the thing whose identity is at issue. James' theory of personal identity is thus a consequent of his account of the self. In other words, James recognizes the principle that the "same" is an incomplete term that functions only in conjunction with substantives or things intended to be thought about.

For James the question is not whether, but how we are able to reidentify ourselves and others. That we do so, James believes, is a matter of fact. According to James our ability to recognize ourselves is like the ability a cattle owner has when he "picks out and sorts together when the time for the round-up comes in the spring, all the beasts on which

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[171] Ibid.

he finds his particular brand."[172] James writes,

> As we think we see an identical bodily thing when, in spite of changes in structure, it exists continuously before our eyes, or when, however interrupted its presence, its quality returns unchanged, so here we think we experience an identical self when it appears to us in an analogous way. Continuity makes us unite what dissimilarity might otherwise separate; similarity makes us unite what discontinuity might hold apart.[173]

The self possesses no absolute unity. What unity it has is comparative and generic. The past and present selves compared are the same only to the extent they really are the same. "Where the resemblance and the continuity are no longer felt," says James, "the sense of personal identity goes too."[174]

For James, self-identity is more of a relative identity, "that of a slow shifting in which there is always some common ingredient retained."[175] He refers to Pope's story of a man who had his black worsted stockings darned so often with silk that they were finally transformed into a pair of silk stockings. To the owner of the stockings they kept their identity throughout this period and in the end they felt as

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[172] Principles, I, p. 317.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid., I, p. 318.

[175] Ibid., I, p. 352.

warm and as intimate as they ever did. With regards to identity, the self is similar to this pair of stockings. The criteria of identity of persons has commonly been either memory or bodily continuity or both. James notes that since the body and memories are both subject to change, "the identity found by the I in its me is only a loosely constructed thing, an identity 'on the whole' just like that which any outside observer might find in the same assemblage of facts."[176]

James points out that alterations in the ME recognized by the I or by the Other may be slight or quite grave. It is common to hear the expression "He is so changed one would not know him," and James notes that it is only less often that an individual speaks of himself in this way. For the most part, however, we tend to think of selves as having the stability and lasting identity that we find in our furniture. Sometimes circumstances forces one to suddenly recognize that this is truly not the case. Imagine a man happily married for years to a woman whom he deeply loves. It is then his misfortune to go to war and be captured by the enemy and spend five years of his life as a prisoner of war. After the war he is released and comes home expecting to pick up his civilian life where it was interrupted by the war. Many soldiers in this situation have been greeted upon their return with the sad words, "Sorry dear, but I'm not the same

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[176] Ibid.

person you left behind." To the soldier his wife looks basically unchanged, and he is baffled and shocked by her statement. He is told by his wife that the person he cared for and the person who cared for him no longer exists, but to him there she stands right before him just like the same old sofa. Eventually the soldier comes to accept the fact that selves can change in a way that sofas do not, for they can actually vanish altogether. For in the above case for all practical reasons this soldier's bride has vanished. It is time we realize that the models that we currently tend to use in our understanding of the self (for example: furniture) may be more than misleading; they may be harmful.

James' "judging thought" makes possible both personal identity (unlike Hume) and the dissolution of personal identity (unlike Kant). Through appropriation by the present pulse of consciousness, an individual may maintain a sense of identity by repossessing enough information about himself. There is always, however, a possibility that an individual may not be able to do this. Selves disappear. People forget, undergo amnesia, sink into insanity and manifest multiple personalities and sometimes are transformed into neural vegetables. Such drastic alterations in selfhood are described by James in The Principles of Psychology, The Varieties of Religious Experiences, and in an article titled "The Hidden Self." The Jamesian account of the self

is able to account for these mutations in selfhood in a more adequate way than either Hume or Kant.

In the Jamesian account what identity the self possesses is an identity based upon (1) the functional identity of the pulses of one's consciousness and (2) the constituted identity of the ME. These factors account for the experienced identity of the self. They do not give to the self an absolute identity that some feel it has, but James insists that we have no reason to believe that the self possesses an absolute identity, nor that it even needs such an identity. It is this imagined need that gave birth to fictions like the soul and the transcendental ego, as well as Hume's attitude of skepticism. James is determined to avoid all three of these fruitless alternatives. His phenomenological account of the experienced identity of the self does just that.

The functional identity of the pulses of one's consciousness refers to the fact that each new pulse of consciousness carries on the same function as subject of experience. Each new pulse of consciousness inherits the title of "I" and functions as the "I" while appropriating the entire past stream of consciousness to the body that it presently feels. This act of appropriation is what makes possible whatever sameness the self is experienced as having.

James' description of the identity of the self involves

no permanent substratum of change. Personal identity is not a case of inherence in a lasting entity like a soul or transcendental ego. In his treatment of the self, James holds the character of flux and flow to be primordial. There is no permanent ego above or behind the flux. What identity the self has is constituted in and with the flux. It is to be found in the immediate felt continuity and resemblance of the pulses that form a single unified stream of consciousness. The present pulse of subjectivity appropriates its predecessor which exhibits the same warmth and intimacy as it. There exists within the stream of consciousness a continuous and immanent self-relatedness. Constant accumulative appropriation of earlier by subsequent pulses of thought is what makes possible self-identity. James notes that yesterday's and today's pulses of consciousness have no substantial identity for when one is here the other has already perished. These pulses of consciousness have, however, a functional identity for they are aware of the same past in the same way and know and react to one's by-gone ME in the same caring manner. "Successive thinkers, numerically distinct, but all aware of the same past in the same way," says James, "form an adequate vehicle for all the experience of personal unity and sameness which we actually have."[177]

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[177]James, Psychology, Briefer Course, pp. 202-203.

One's present pulse of caring consciousness is in no need of anything to make it an "I." It is always felt as the very core of one's existence for one exists through it. Its identity with the past stream of subjectivity is made possible through the continuous acts of appropriation by which one's past subjectivity is transformed into the spiritual ME of the present pulse of consciousness. In a very real sense the "I" dimension of the self exists only in the present, for only the present pulse of consciousness is able to function as the subject of experience. The title of "I" is truly given up and passed on to the next pulse of consciousness with the practical result being that the subject is always moving forward in time. "Each Thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned," states James, "transmitting whatever is realized as its Self to its own later proprietor."[178] To say that each new pulse of consciousness inherits the title "I" means that it functions in such a way that it is capable of serving as the referent of the concept "I." The present pulse of consciousness is for James not only the knower but also the source of interest and effort and so rightfully inherits the title "I."

As mentioned above, the identity of the self is based upon two principal conditions: (1) the functional identity of the pulses of one's consciousness and (2) the constituted identity of the "ME" by one's caring consciousness. We have

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[178] Principles, I, p. 322.

just examined the first condition, let us now look at the second.[179]

The experience of sameness in the "ME" as in the case of any object of consciousness is the result of the mind's intention to think the same as before. This sense of sameness is the source of all experienced sameness. Whether things in themselves are actually the same makes no difference for without the mind's ability to intend an object as the same as before no object would be so experienced. A thing may change considerably during the course of time but if consciousness intends it as the same object, then it is experienced as the very same object that was encountered before despite the changes. Of course, consciousness is only going to intend the object as being the same if the changes are consistent with the natural changes of an object of that kind. A tree, for example, may lose its leaves and still be regarded as the same object, but if it starts walking about it is not likely to be regarded by consciousness as the same object that was experienced before this change occurred. In any case, no matter what changes do actually occur in the object, if consciousness intends it as the same object, then it is experienced as the same object. James says that the

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[179] In The Origins of Pragmatism (op. cit.) A. J. Ayer gives a brilliant detailed analysis of the first condition but barely touches upon the second condition. If Ayer had given equal attention to both conditions, he might not have wrongfully chastised James for ignoring the role of the body in the experience of personal identity.

principle of constancy in the mind's meanings can be expressed as follows:

> The same matters can be thought of in successive portions of the mental stream, and some of these portions can know that they mean the same matters which the other portions meant. One might put it otherwise by saying that the mind can always intend, and know when it intends, to think of the Same.[180]

The identity of the ME is the result of this sense of sameness.[181] Consciousness has the ability to think a thing as being the same as was thought before. The identity of the ME is the main source of the feeling of an identical self. Here the body is the dominant factor. As stated above, all the objects that form a part of one's objective self involve some reference to the body. Sameness in the ME requires sameness in the body. The body is, however, something that changes. The cells of the body, for example, are continuously being replaced by new cells. Immutability, however, is not what is required here. What is required is that consciousness intend this changing physical mass as being the same body and thus the same old objective core of its self. What sameness the ME is experienced as having is contingent upon the intention of consciousness to think the same ME. "The sense of sameness," says James, "is the

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[180] Principles, I, p. 434.

[181] See James Edie's brilliant and lucid account of the role of "the sense of sameness" in James' account of personal identity. op. cit.

very keel and backbone of our thinking."[182] The sense of one's personal identity reposes on it. In other words the functional identity of the pulses of consciousness is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the experience of personal identity. An objective identity must also be present within the ME aspect of the self. James writes,

> The sense of personal identity is not, then, this mere synthetic form essential to all thought. It is the sense of a sameness perceived by thought and predicated of things thought-about. These things are a present self and a self of yesterday. The thought not only thinks them both, but thinks that they are identical.[183]

In order to fully understand the sameness that is to be found in the objective dimension of the self, we must first examine James' notion of the sense of sameness more fully. This function of consciousness is regarded by James as being the source of all experience of identical objects. Unfortunately, James did not make explicit his doctrine of the sense of sameness until many pages after his chapter on the self. It is to his chapter on conception that we must turn to more fully understand his view of self-identity.[184]

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[182] Principles, I, p. 434.

[183] Ibid., I, p. 315.

[184] James Bayley regards James' chapter on conception as the key to understanding his theory of personal identity. Unfortunately Bayley employs James' notion of conception to reduce the Jamesian "I" to a collection of organic movements that are tied together simply by the concept self. No doubt James would regard this as another extreme case of "anti-spiritualist fevor." op. cit.

In his chapter on conception James pointed out that whether there exists any real identity in the things themselves or not, we would never notice an identity if we had no sense of sameness. We choose "the point of view of the mind's structure alone."[185] James was well aware of the fact that for any object to be experienced as "the same," its various perspectival apearances which consciousness grasps in separate temporal moments must be treated by consciousness as being aspects of the same object. The notion of something that remains identical amidst the variation of its appearances and is evidently independent of them is accomplished through the "sense of sameness."

James believes that we are masters of our meanings and sameness is found in the world of the meant. Due to the "principle of constancy" in the mind's meanings, one is always able, and always conscious of being able, to think about the same one thought of before. Although he denied we ever get the same sensation twice, James insisted we do encounter the same objects of thought all the time. For James, things can be experienced as "the same" only by a mind which can grasp them and hold them before itself through the flux of temporal experience. Here James is offering us his version of the principle of intentionality. According to this phenomenological principle, consciousness can grasp, in a real, intentional act, an objective meaning to which it can

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[185] Principles, I, p. 435.

always return. As Herbert Spiegelberg has pointed out, the "sense of sameness" is just James' term for the intentional character of consciousness that allows me to constitute objects as being the same not only through my own temporal experience for me, but also as being the same for anyone that thinks them.[186]

James notes that although the thing we mean to point at may change considerably without our knowledge of the alterations, in our meaning itself we are not deceived; our intention is to think of the same. Sensations may never repeat themselves but this is not the case with the "object of thought." James writes,

> Each conception ... eternally remains what it is, and can never become another. The mind may change its states, and its meanings at different times; may drop one conception and take up another, but the dropped conception can in no intelligible sense be said to change into its successor ... Thus amid the flux of opinions and physical things, the world of conceptions, or things intended to be thought about, stands stiff and immutable, like Plato's Realm of Ideas.[187]

But of course James is no Platonist. Unlike Plato, James regards conceptions as historically acquired tools of the human world. He writes,

> ...this translation (of the perceptual into the conceptual order of the world) always takes place for the sake of some subjective interest, and...the

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[186] Herbert Spiegelberg. The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. I, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 161.

[187] Principles, I, p. 437.

> conception with which we handle a bit of sensible experience is really nothing but a teleological instrument. This whole function of conceiving, of fixing, and holding fast to meanings, has no significance apart from the fact that the conceiver is a creature with partial purposes and private ends.[188]

In The Meaning of Truth James spoke of certain special conceptions which he refers to as "apperceiving ideas." These concepts, James believes, arose as "spontaneous variations" and have become permanent fixtures in human thought because of their usefulness in handling the flux of experience. James regards these apperceiving ideas as,

> ...definite conquests made at historic dates by our ancestors in their attempts to get the chaos of their crude individual experiences into a more shareable and manageable shape. They proved of such sovereign use as denkmittel that they are now a part of the very structure of our mind. We cannot play fast and loose with them. No experience can upset them. On the contrary, they apperceive every experience and assign it to its place.[189]

James treats consciousness as the realm of meaning. He holds that sameness is to be found neither in the constantly changing physical world nor in our fleeting states of consciousness. Sameness can be had only on the level of the objectively meant. On this level it is important to note

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[188] Ibid., I, p. 456.

[189] William James, The Meaning of Truth, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 42.

that James regards the concept of self as one of our most primitive and colossally useful denkmittel.[190]

Now that we have a clearer understanding of what James means by the "Sense of Sameness" we must now examine the role it plays in self-identity. The ME (the objective dimension of the self) is regarded by James as a highly complex object. Yet James believes that to recognize one's ME as being the same through a period of time is an achievement on par with the recognition that this desk is the same one I experienced yesterday. In the case of the desk it is not necessary that it be microscopically inspected to make sure that there has been no physical changes at all in order for me to experience it as the same desk; nor is necessary that my perspectival perceptions of the desk be identical for both days in order for me to experience it as the same desk. Such analysis is unnecessary for the experience of sameness in the case of the desk and the same is true of the experience of self-identity. Such operations are unnecessary; it is only necessary to analyze my meaning-intention itself. And according to James I can always mean the same again. Like the desk, the ME is an object constituted in consciousness and to constitute an object is to intend it as distinct from every other and as being the same as itself through a temporal flux. Although the ME is regarded by James as being a very complex field of cared-for objects, there is one

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[190]William James, Pragmatism, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 84-85.

primarily interesting object from which this whole field of care seems to radiate and that object is called the body. The body is that ever present object which consciousness with rare exceptions continually judges to be the same ME. It is important to note that for James the body in itself does not guarantee self-identity. There is no experience of an identical ME in the absence of those functions of consciousness known as care and the sense of sameness. The identity of the objective self requires that the body be cared for and judged to be identical. James writes,

> It belongs to the great class of judgments of sameness and there is nothing more remarkable in making a judgment of sameness in the first person than in the second or the third. The intellectual operations seem essential alike, whether I say "I am the same," or whether I say "the pen is the same, as yesterday." It is as easy to think the opposite and say "neither I nor the pen is the same."[191]

James' meaning is clear. The ME is discovered to be the "same" through a series of experiences in the same way in which any other object of consciousness can always again be experienced as the "same" as was meant in an earlier experience. He writes,

> The sense of our personal identity, then, is exactly like anyone of our other perceptions of sameness among phenomena. It is a conclusion grounded either on the resemblance in a fundamental respect, or on the continuity before the mind, of the phenomena compared.[192]

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[191] Principles, I, p. 315.

[192] Ibid., I, p. 318.

James regards "absolute identity" as being one of those terms that are presupposed by all others and something we never encounter in experience but instead attain to the conception of it:

> ...[by] the direct perception of a difference between compounds (i.e. physical objects), and the imaginary prolongation of the direction of the difference to an ideal terminus, the notion of which we fix and keep as one of our permanent subjects of discourse.[193]

No absolute identity is to be found in the ME. Like every other aggregate, it changes with the passage of time. The numerous cases of mental breakdown, and those rare cases of multiple selves, and even the manner in which most of us view our own distant past clearly indicates that the ME is anything but a stable and permanent thing. Hence James calls it a "fluctuating material." He is thus quite serious when he claims that one's body by itself is no guarantee of one's identity as a person. The body must be judged to be identical and mine and this judgement is made only if the body is viewed with a high degree of care. Upon these conditions rest the maintenance of self-identity; when they vanish so does the self. Maintenance of self-identity is a continuous task in which failure is always possible. The identity of the ME is thus based upon care and the sense of sameness and in both cases the body plays a vital role for it

[193] Ibid., I, p. 480.

is felt with the highest degree of warmth and intimacy and is moreover that ever present object in the field of experience. Consequently, the body functions as the core of the ME to which all its other elements (material, social and spiritual) are arranged and bound. The objective dimension of the self (i.e. ME) is then a network of interrelated cherished objects which has the lived-body as its center, and it is due primarily to this center that there is a sense of self-identity through the temporal flow of one's life. As James points out, we feel the whole cubic mass of our body continuously and "it gives us an unceasing sense of personal existence."[194]

Let us now summarize our findings on the identity to be found in the Jamesian self. For James, self identity always entails two kinds of sameness: (1) Sameness in the self as knower and (2) Sameness in the self as known.[195] The first is provided by the functional identity of the pulses of one's consciousness and the second by the constituted identity of the ME. Each factor contributes to the identity of the self for each of these dimensions is an aspect of the same self. Together these factors, however, do not give to the self "a sort of metaphysical or absolute Unity in which all differences are overwhelmed."[196] Yet, they do give to the

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[194] Ibid., I, p. 316.

[195] James, Psychology, Briefer Course, pp. 201-202.

[196] Ibid., p. 202.

self, the identity, "which the facts require us to suppose."[197] James writes,

> If in the sentence 'I am the same that I was yesterday,' we take the 'I' broadly, it is evident that in many ways I am not the same. As a concrete ME, I am somewhat different from what I was: then hungry, now full; then walking, now at rest; then poorer, now rich; then younger, now older; etc. And yet in other ways I am the same, and we may call these the essential ways. My name and profession and relations to the world are identical, my face, my faculties and store of memories, are practically indistinguishable, now and then...the past and present selves compared are the same just so far as they are the same, and no farther. They are the same in kind. But this generic sameness coexist with generic difference just as real; and if from the one point of view I am one self, from another I am quite as truly many.[198]

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[197] Ibid., p. 203.

[198] Ibid., pp. 201-202.

PART SEVEN

THE JAMESIAN SELF: AN APPRAISAL

In this section we will be discussing the merits of the Jamesian theory of the self. In so doing we will be comparing the Jamesian theory to the traditional alternative theories with respect to the following issues: (1) care, (2) temporality, (3) agency and (4) sociality. The goal of this section is to show that the Jamesian approach leads to a richer and more adequate concept of the self than any of its four traditional rivals.

These four issues, care, temporality, agency and sociality, have not been chosen arbitrarily. It is through a careful consideration of each of these experiential features of our personal existence that we come to realize the enormous contribution James has made to our understanding of selfhood. There are at least five reasons for taking this approach in our appraisal of the Jamesian self: (1) It is clear that an adequate theory of the self will be one that will not only not neglect these four experiential facts of human existence but will explain their inter-relationship in a single unified self. (2) These are the four features of our personal existence that have often been neglected by past philosophers whose search for the self was dominated by a too narrow concern for the epistemological subject. (3) All four features (care, temporality, agency and sociality) are

emphasized in the Jamesian theory of the self. (4) Important objections can be raised regarding James' treatment of each of these four aspects of our personal existence. (5) The major uniqueness of the Jamesian theory of the self lies in its bold attempt to account for all four of these attributes of personhood and show their inter-relationship in a single concrete existing self.

A major weakness that is common in the traditional theories of the self is a tendency not to confront and deal with all the various experiential facts involved in selfhood. Each of the traditional approaches (Spiritualists, Transcendentalists, Associationists and Behaviorists) began with too narrow a perspective on the problem of selfhood. Their weakness can to a certain extent be traced to the narrowness of their focus. The Spiritualists started this trend by focusing upon the thinking attribute of our being to the exclusion of all else. Associationists and Transcendentalists, after pointing out the inadequacy of the Spiritualist's position, continued to make the same mistake of ignoring the non-cognitive dimension of the self. After recognizing the fruitlessness of all the above narrow explanations, the Behaviorists went on to develop their own one dimensional approach to the problem of the self in which the subjective dimension of the self is methodologically bracketed and then forgotten.

Unlike the above, the Jamesian aproach to the problem of

the self is not based upon any preconceived notion of what in the final analysis must be the self's irreducible core. His is basically a phenomenological approach in that it strives to be as faithful as possible to how the self manifests itself in experience. He is willing to sacrifice the "sentiment for simplicity" and to "reinstate the vague in our experience" in order to discover the meaning of self. As a result of his rigorous and unbiased approach, James discovered a self that is more dynamic and more complex than any of the traditional theories had envisioned and moreover a self that is experiencable.

The great merit of the Jamesian theory of the self is that it addresses itself to all the experiential facts of selfhood without retreating to unexperienced entities or principles to account for them. Four basic experiential facts of selfhood which the Jamesian theory takes into account and which are not fully treated in any of the four major alternative approaches mentioned above are as follows: (1) Care is an essential feature of the self. (2) The self is historical and has a unique temporal structure. (3) The self is essentially an agent. (4) The self is essentially social.

Throughout this essay we have been exploring James' reasons for regarding each of these four points as representing an essential feature of the self. The Jamesian theory of the self is constructed in such a way as to

accommodate all four of these facts. In this section we will be comparing James' position to each of the four traditional theories with regard to each of these four points. Our aim here is not to give a full scale critique of each of the major alternative theories of the self. Such a project would go beyond the scope of this study. Instead, our aim in this section is to show, one, that an adequate theory of the self must account for these four basic facts of selfhood and two, that the Jamesian theory is more adequate than its traditional rivals because it does a better job in this regard. In our appraisal of the Jamesian self we will also examine certain major objections that have been or can be raised regarding James' treatment of each of these four features of selfhood, and we will determine to what extent, if any, they weaken the case for the Jamesian self.

A. CARE

> The words ME, then, and SELF, so far as they arouse feelings and connote emotional worth, are objective designations, meaning ALL THE THINGS which have the power to produce in a stream of consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort.[199]

According to the Jamesian theory presented here, consciousness is a process of care and it is consciousness qua caring that is the ground of selfhood. Only where there is care can a self be said to exist. Care is the sign of selfhood.

The significance of care has been strangely ignored by most philosophical descriptions of the self. It may simply be another case of the most obvious feature being left unexamined because of its very pervasiveness. Or the reason for this failure may have its roots in Western Philosophy's great emphasis upon the powers of reason and their suspicion of the value of subjective feelings. The primary focus of this tradition has been the theoretical side of human existence. The emphasis being here on the "I think" rather than the "I do." Breaking with this tradition, James recovered the practical side of human existence and discovered the role of care in selfhood.

The self is, if it is anything at all, that which one cares most deeply about. This is perhaps the first thing

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[199]Principles, I, p. 304.

that experience teaches us about the self. That self-love characterizes our existence is a fact that all men intuitively recognize. "Our language is laden with evidence," writes Gordon Allport. For he believes, "The commonest compound of self is selfish, and of ego, egoism. pride, humiliation, self esteem, narcissism are such prominent factors that when we speak of ego or self we often have in mind only this aspect of personality."[200] It is this aspect of selfhood that tends to be taken for granted and left philosophically unexplored. James, however, saw this factor in our existence as significant and in need of analysis.

> The altogether unique kind of interest which each human mind feels in those parts of creation which it can call me or mine may be a moral riddle, but it is a fundamental psychological fact....Each of us dichotomizes the Kosmos in a different place....[201]

Why is self-love so common? Why is there this enormous correlation between the phenomenon of care and the self? People are all the time telling us to, "Look out for number one," but no one really needs to be taught this. We all do it quite naturally. The infant is egoism personified. This natural caring attitude is nonetheless easily lost sight of by philosophical investigators seeking the self, especially when they assume the object of their search is a spiritual substance or a pure principle of subjectivity. There is,

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[200]Gordon Allport, Becoming, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955. pp. 44-45.

[201]Principles, I, p. 278.

however, no such blindness in James. As John Smith has pointed out, for James, the manifestation of selfhood first appears, "not in an intuitive apprehension of an ego, but in the discovery that we have an interest in certain parts of what we encounter and that we are ready to ignore the rest."[202]

On the face of it, the question, why is there a strong correlation between the self and care? may seem ridiculous. One is tempted to reply, of course each individual cares for his self, self-preservation is an instinct that all organisms possess. But the two phenomena are not really the same. The self-preservation found in the animal kingdom involves no real self and no real care. Here the term self-preservation refers to a set of reflex reactions and the behavioristic "stimulus-response account" seems appropriate. This fact suggests that it is quite conceivable that a being similar in appearance to man could have evolved in which all its behavior was guided by its brain without consciousness being present and so without care or any sense of self. One has only to think of all the complex acts the body already performs without a conscious awareness, to rediscover the uniqueness of the presence of care. I have in mind here the various complex operations of our internal organs. In light of these observations, the question, why is there a strong

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[202]John Smith, Themes in American Philosophy, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 77.

correlation between the self and care? does not seem ridiculous. The nature of the relationship between caring and the self now appears as something requiring a more penetrating phenomenological exploration.

The relationship between care and the self James examined from a new perspective. Scientific revolutions are often born out of merely taking a different perspective on an issue, or viewing an old problem in a new context, or asking a whole new set of questions. Copernicus and Darwin are prime examples of this. James leaps past the obvious question: How come this thing called the self generates so much care? He ponders instead the question: Could it be that it is care which is responsible for the generation of the self? He concludes that caring is not the result of "mineness," but is rather the root of it. His phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon of selfhood leads him to the discovery that care is a constitutive factor in the formation of one's material, social, and spiritual ME. All objects that enter and form a part of my total historic ME do so through the medium of care. I don't care for these objects because I sense somehow they have a reference to some "inner principle of subjectivity," rather I identify with these objects because I care for them.

> To have a self that I can care for, nature must first present me with some <u>object</u> interesting enough to make me instinctively wish to appropriate it for its <u>own</u> sake, and out of it to manufacture one of those material, social or spiritual selves which we

Spriritualists embrace in their investigation of human existence. This, however, represents only one dimension of selfhood and it is not at all clear that it is even its primary dimension. Even the self of the professional philosopher is not so one dimensional. Even Hume played his backgammon. James does not view the subjecthood of the self as primary. For him, all knowing is for a doing. Both truth and meaning in James' Pragmatic philosophy are grounded in terms of action and consequences in the real world. I'm confident that James would applaud the comment of John Macmurray: "Against the assumption that the Self is, at least primarily, a 'knowing subject,' I have maintained that its subjecthood is a derivative and negative aspect of its agency."[205]

Care also did not find its way in the Associationists' account of the self. After correctly criticizing the substantial soul theory, Hume continued down the Spiritualists' same narrow path of equating identity of self with identity of mind. As in the case with Descartes, the epistemic self became Hume's sole concern. As a result, Hume ended up with a self that was a bundle of passive unrelated impressions and ideas. The practical effect being that the single soul substance was displaced by a chain of little substances each having the same independent status of the

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[205]John Macmurray, The Self as Agent (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1953), pp. 11-12.

original Cartesian substance. What Hume failed to fully appreciate was that certain impressions involve a special warmth and intimacy. In other words, consciousness cares more for some of its objects than others, and it especially cares for that object called the body. If one ignores the role of care in selfhood, one is easily led to also ignore the role of the most cared for object, the body. If the dynamic telic nature of consciousness is lost sight of, one can easily be misled into identifying the self with all the contents of consciousness, or finding this distasteful, concluding the self must be a fiction.

Care also plays no role in the transcendentalist's theory of the self. There can be no great warm regard for an empty ego. The phenomenon of self-love or self-esteem can't refer to love or esteem for the barren ego that Kant presents us with. One does not identify with a pure principle of subjectivity for one can't care for that which transcends all possible experience. Kant would admit that his transcendental ego forms no part of the cherished objective self, but he would insist nonetheless that it does constitute the self as knower. James points out that it is unnecessary and foolish to posit a second mysterious self hiding behind the self that we do in fact experience and care for. There may be unknown conditions that are required for the possibility of experience, but whatever they may be they are no more deserving of the name "self" than the oxygen one

breathes which one may also view as a condition for consciousness. The experiential cherished self is the only real self and it is the self as both knower and doer.

> To sum up, then, we see no reason to suppose that 'self-love' is primarily, or secondarily, or ever, love for one's mere principle of conscious identity.[206]

The role of care in selfhood may have been ignored by some because of an urge to treat the self in a "scientific fashion" that does not involve questions of value or analysis of feelings. Here we have the restrictive and inadequate methodology of Behaviorism. Their sterile approach can never uncover the field of the personal for a self always represents a particular value system. To reveal what matters to you, is to reveal your very selfhood. Care can not be washed away or distilled with the hope of finding some substantial residue called, "self." When an individual is confused about his or her own values, we sometimes say that the person is suffering from an identity crisis. Far from being metaphoric, these words describe the situation quite accurately. Differences in care, alterations in what one values, does in fact mean self-transformation. The quality and quantity of my self-field is determined by the direction and degree of my caring involvement with the objects presented in consciousness. Where there is no such involvement, there is no self. In the account of the

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[206] Principles, I, p. 307.

Behaviorists there is no place for a caring consciousness that through its efficacy both creates and maintains a self. But to view man as an automaton, to explain away his behavior in terms of reflexes and conditioned reinforcement, and to treat all consciousness and feeling as epiphenomena is an effort not in the direction of solving the mystery of selfhood but of reducing it to something it is not, i.e. something that their quantitative measuring tools can handle with ease. Here is the "sentiment of rationality" once again forgetting its humble origin in the prereflective world of lived-experience.[207]

> But what is this abstract numerical principle of identity, this 'NUMBER ONE' within me, for which, according to proverbial philosophy, I am supposed to keep so constant a 'lookout'?[208]

James considers in turn whether it be physiological adjustments, or the principle of pure subjectivity, or the chain of thoughts, or the soul or the pronoun I. He reaches the conclusion that the self for which he feels "hot regard" can't be any of these items. He points out that even if he was given all these things he would "still be cold, and fail to exhibit anything worthy of the name of selfishness or devotion to 'Number One.'"[209]

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[207] James, "The Sentiment of Rationality" in The Will to Believe and Other Essays on Popular Philosophy and Human Immortality. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.

[208] Principles, I, p. 303.

[209] Ibid., pp. 303-304.

If none of these, what is it I care for in self-love? What is that which I cherish and seek to preserve and increase at all cost? It is always my total empirical selfhood, my historic me, which is nothing mysterious, but is rather a collection of objective facts. "Its own body, then first of all, its friends next, and finally its spiritual dispositions, must be the supremely interesting objects for each human mind."[210]

A theory of the self which ignores the dominant role of care will not be able to deal with all the features of selfhood (material, social and spiritual) or account for their unity in a concrete individual. The fundamental ground of the self's temporality, agency and sociality is consciousness qua caring. It is through care that the self projects a future, has ends to motivate action, and is sensitive to its own image in the minds of others. Care is one of the experiential facts of selfhood that the Jamesian theory handles more adequately than the major traditional accounts of the self.

It was James' rigorous faithfulness to phenomena as they manifest themselves in experience, i.e. his phenomenological approach, which prevented James from ignoring the dominant role of care in the field of the personal. But perhaps there are good reasons for not giving care the central role that the Jamesian theory does. Perhaps the

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[210] Ibid., pp. 307-308.

traditional theorists of the self recognized these reasons. Let us now consider three such possible reasons, which may be formulated as a critique of the role played by care in the Jamesian theory of the self: (1) It turns the self into a by-product of an emotion and consequently trivalizes it or reduces it to the status of an illusion. (2) It ignores the fact that each of us seem to have certain elements in our self that we actually despise rather than cherish. (3) It makes the self non-public and graspable only in the first person.

Let us now examine the first charge. It can be stated in the following manner. In making care the central constitutive factor in selfhood, James is making the self a mere product of emotionality. In so doing, he turns the self into a mirage, deprives it of any real agency and extends its boundaries to an absurd degree. Is the charge valid? There are many Jamesian statements that can be cited that seem to support the objection.

> This sort of interest is really the meaning of the word 'my.' Whatever has it is eo ipso a part of me.[211]

> The fact remains, however, that certain special sorts of things tend primordially to possess this interest, and form the natural me....The phenomenon of passion is in origin and essence the same, whatever be the target upon which it is discharged; and what the target actually happens to be is solely a question of fact.[212]

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[211] Ibid., p. 308.

[212] Ibid., p. 309.

> In its widest possible sense, however, a man's Self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down -- not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.[213]

> The words, ME, then, and SELF, so far as they arouse feeling and connote emotional worth, are objective designations, meaning ALL THE THINGS which have the power to produce in a stream of consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort.[214]

What is this "excitement of a peculiar sort" which all these objects elicit? Is it simply an emotion? Does James ever specify in any clear consistent way what this "excitement" is that personalizes a certain portion of one's field of consciousness? James' vocabulary seems to suggest that it is something like an emotion, but the truth is he never clearly defined the care which personalizes. He has referred to this special mode of care as: "the sting of interest," "love," "emotional involvement," "sense of importance," "intimacy," "animal warmth" and "excitement of a peculiar sort." On the face of it, it seems a case can be made for claiming that James makes the self a product of an emotion. There is evidence, however, which suggest that this

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[213] Ibid., pp. 279-280.

[214] Ibid., p. 304.

was not James' basic intention. If one considers first his quasi-behavioristic theory of the emotions and second his description of the fifth trait of thought as selectivity, one is led to believe that the care which personalizes the objects in the field of consciousness is not a particular emotion but is rather the interest which is present always in consciousness as the ground of its selectivity. In other words, care is not a particular feeling such as fear or love or hate but is rather consciousness itself viewed in terms of its selectivity which according to James is on going. James writes, "If one must have a single name for the condition upon which the impulsive and inhibitive quality of objects depends one had better call it their interest."[215]

We may be here going beyond certain explicit remarks of James. This, however, should cause us no concern since it is not the purpose of this essay to merely restate James' explicit position. From the start, our goal has been rather to present a Jamesian theory of the self that is based upon his valuable insights regarding the nature of consciousness and the self, the inter-relationship of these insights, and their necessary implications. It is James' confusing and even overwhelming richness which we must both draw upon and amend.

In the Jamesian posture, care is not a particular emotion such as is fear, love or hate. Care is a term that

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[215] Ibid., II, p. 1164.

refers to the volitional focus within consciousness. To attend, to select, or to think is to care. The care which forms one's objective self is nothing other than the interested and choosing feature of consciousness which James refers to as the fifth trait of thought. The following words of James are from his section dealing with the selectivity of consciousness.

> But in my mind and your mind the rejected portions and the selected portions of the original world-stuff are to a great extent the same....There is, however, one entirely extraordinary case in which no two men ever are known to choose alike. One great splitting of the whole universe into two halves is made by each of us; and for each of us almost all of the interest attaches to one of the halves; but we all draw the line of division between them in a different place. When I say that we all call the two halves by the same names, and that those names are 'me' and 'not-me' respectively, it will at once be seen what I mean.[216]

He does not abandon this position when it comes to his chapter on the self. In fact, he reasserts it and refers back to the section dealing with the selectivity of consciousness. James makes the following statement in his chapter on the self.

> This is as strong an example as there is of that selective industry of the mind on which I insisted some pages back (p. 284 ff). Our thought, incessantly deciding, among many things of a kind, which ones for it shall be realities, here chooses one of many possible selves or characters, and forthwith reckons it no shame to fail in any of those not adopted expressly as its own.[217]

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[216] Ibid., I, p. 277.

Consciousness is not regarded by James as a chain of passive witnesses or simple awareness; for him it's a roaring river of care. Care is always present in experience in various degrees. It not only helps constitute one's self, it also helps constitute one's life-world. James' notion of the intentionality of consciousness is primarily teleological. He views it as intrinsically purposeful. It involves interests, goals and choice. Gary Kessler in his article, "pragmatic Bodies Versus Transcendental Egos" points out that it is this feature of James' theory of consciousness which "signals an important difference between James' notion of intentionality and Husserl's."[218] James is in fact closer to Sartre's view of consciousness as being a "for-itself" and "a passion for being." Here in the Jamesian posture toward the self we call this feature of consciousness "care."

We must now consider an obvious objection to identifying care with the volitional focus of consciousness. Since this selectivity is involved in all the intentional objects of consciousness does this not imply the absurd position of identifying one's self with one's world? One might pause here and ask oneself, But is such a position so manifestly absurd? Is there not a sense in which one identifies with one's entire world? Isn't there a sense in which each of us personalizes his or her world? Isn't there a sense in which one's world is a reflection of one's self? This is suggested in the following words of James:

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[218]Gary Kessler, "Pragmatic Bodies Versus Transcendental Egos," Transactions of Charles Peirce Society, Vol. 14, pp. 101-119, Spring 1978. p. 109.

> We may, if we like, by our reasoning unwind things back to that black and jointless continuity of space and moving clouds of swarming atoms which science calls the only real world. But all the while the world we feel and live in will be that which our ancestors and we, by slowly cumulative strokes of choice, have extricated out of this, like sculptors, by simply rejecting certain portions of the given stuff. Other sculptors, other statues from the same stone! Other minds, other worlds from the same monotonous and inexpressive chaos! My world is but one in a million alike embedded, alike real to those who may abstract them. How different must be the worlds in the consciousness of ant, cuttle-fish, or crab![219]

Nevertheless, James does not incorporate all the objects of consciousness into the self. The world remains divided into self and non-self despite the ubiquitousness of care. The objective self is simply those objects which evoke an extremely intense and enduring form of care. One's body and other objects in practical relation to it tend to be the only part of one's world to illicit this habitual and intense form of care. In this way, it can be said that care is constitutive of both the self and world without equating one with the other. It is because the same creative force is at work in determining both the meaning of self and world, that we have a self which is a "fluctuating material" and a situation in which the boundaries between self and world are vague and shifting all the time. For James the "sting of interest" is fundamental for both the sense of the real world or belief and the sense of self. The distinction between the

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[219] Principles, I, p. 277.

two seems to be simply that the world includes all that is continuously related to the self in a spatial, temporal, or causal manner and not only that portion of reality for which one has a "hot regard." The embodied self remains the "anchor" of reality but it is not the whole of reality. The feeling of emotional involvement and interest is called for by both the self and the lived-world. The self is simply that portion of the world which generates the most intense form of care.

One might still claim, however, that this intense and enduring form of care ought to be regarded as an emotion even if the other modes of care are not. There are good reasons for not treating James' personalizing care as an emotional state. (1) Personalizing care is always present in consciousness but we are not always in agitated states. (2) Personalizing care involves a sense of worthwhileness, of interest, of importance but these are not necessarily present in what we call an emotion. (3) Personalizing care involves a sense of warmth and importance that makes for efficiency and unity while emotional excitement tends to cause just the opposite. For example, a healthy self-regard tends to be viewed as a positive factor for doing well on a test, but being in an emotional state tends to be viewed as a negative factor here.

Gordon Allport takes a similar view in his distinction between what he calls propriate states (i.e. ego-involved

states) and emotional states. He writes:

> Each lasting sentiment in personality is a propriate state, but only on occasion does a sentiment erupt into emotion. An Amundsen planning for decades to fly over the North Pole is constantly ego-involved but rarely agitated. It is true that all propriate striving is felt to be important and laden with value -- in this sense it is an affective state; but the sense of warmth and importance makes for efficiency and unity, not for the disruption and disintegration that often accompany emotional excitement....We cannot, therefore, permit the two conditions to be confused....[220]

We must take a similar position in our Jamesian theory with regard to care and emotionality. They are not to be confused in our theory of the self.

Thus we see that it is not true that the Jamesian theory makes the self a mere product of emotionality. Care is not the same as an emotion but is rather the ground of all emotions, actions and relations that form one's personal life. The first objection to the role given to care in the Jamesian theory is without merit.

We must now consider another possible objection to the role played by care in the Jamesian theory of the self. In the form of a question it could be stated as follows: "How can care be the ground of my objective self, if there are aspects of my self which I truly dislike?" How do persons account for those sections of their selfhood that they despise and loathe if care is regarded as that which forms

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[220]Allport, Becoming, p. 59.

the objective self? It seems that nearly all of us have such uncherished features that are recognized nonetheless as elements of the self. I'm not particularly fond of the shape of my nose, but I still view it as mine. My disliking it, doesn't mean I disown it. Doesn't such an example serve as testimony against the Jamesian view that it is only through care that objects form a part of the self.

Robert Ehman believes this is a real flaw in James' theory. He writes, "...James fails to account for our feeling of the relevance of our self of certain items in which we have no interest and to which we may fail to respond emotionally...."[221]

This second objection is actually related to the first objection which we have just considered. It is based on the presumption that the care which personalizes is an emotion, that particular emotion called love. As we have already shown, it is not. Thus there is no inconsistency in saying that care is the author of selfhood and at the same time agreeing that there are features of my self that I don't like. The opposite of personalizing care is not hate or a feeling of dislike. Care means interest, worth and importance and more than objects of love fall into this category. A person is in fact interested in, values and

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[221]Robert Ehman, "William James and the Structure of the Self," New Essays in Phenomenology, ed. by James Edie, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969. pp. 260-261.

regards as important those things which he hates for one reason or another. A person must be interested in and view as important the object of hate if one is going to sustain that emotion in consciousness. If care has an opposite, it would have to be described as something like absolute disinterest and perfect insulation. In other words, it would have the characteristic of a thing, that is simply "en soi" in the Sartrian sense.

Thus we see that this second objection loses its force as soon as we understand that the term "care" in our Jamesian theory is used in a special technical sense so that it no longer means simply "like" or "love" but rather refers to the impulsive and teleological character of consciousness itself, i.e. James' special brand of intentionality.

There is another possible objection to the role of care in the Jamesian theory. This objection could be stated as follows: In making care the ground of selfhood the Jamesian theory turns the self into something non-public, something that can be grapsed only in first person experience and never by the Other. The objection is not valid because care manifest itself in one's concrete actions.

Care is not something beyond the notice of the Other. James defines this caring character of consciousness in such a manner that its presence can be scrutinized by the Other. "Our interest in things means the attention and emotion which the thought of them will excite and the actions which their

presence will evoke."[222] In short, real care will be reflected in one's observable behavior. Just as James defines true belief as a willingness to act, so also one manifest what one really cares for through action. We don't have to rely on the testimony of the subject to determine the constituents of his particular concrete self. In fact, due to self deception or what Sartre calls bad faith, the Other may know my self-field more accurately, especially if the Other is an intimate friend or relative, my therapist or my scrupulous biographer. Prior to Sartre, James held that one reveals his true self in his undertakings. His actions define his cared-for-self not only to the Other but to himself as well. Here lie the seeds of his later pragmatic doctrine. In the Jamesian theory, the self is primarily an agent. Regarding its agency more will be said later.

The Jamesian self unlike a soul or a transcendental ego is very public. All the objects that are cared for by consciousness and form a part of the Jamesian self are out there in the world. It is true that the caring consciousness itself is non-public in the Jamesian theory. Here we have what James calls "absolute insulation." This aspect of the other's self I don't have direct access to. But outside of a few believers in mental telepathy I don't know of anyone who seriously doubts the radical privacy of consciousness itself, and I know of no good evidence that suggest that James is

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[222] Principles, I, p. 304.

mistaken on this point. Although it is true that the objective elements of the self are ordered around a subjective center, we mustn't forget that this subjective center loses its meaning apart from its objective circumference. In other words, I cannot care without caring for something, something that belongs to the shared-lived-world.

We see then that this third objection to the role of care in the Jamesian theory is invalid. The emphasis on care does not result in an insulated and non-public self. The Jamesian self is public and graspable by the Other. It is as public as a conscious being can be and a great deal more public than a soul or a transcendental ego.

In this section we have discussed the role of care in the Jamesian theory of the self. We have shown why it should be treated as an experiential feature of selfhood. We have shown how this experiential fact was not fully grasped by any of the four major alternative theories of the self. We have discussed possible objections for giving care the role that it has in the Jamesian theory, and we have found each of these objection lacking in merit. Given the above, I think its fair to conclude that of the theories we have discussed and with respect to this one basic experiential fact of selfhood, the Jamesian theory is superior.

B. TEMPORALITY

> Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date.[223]

The self manifest itself in experience as having a mutable and accumulative existence in time. The self is an historical process such that for it there is always a future appearing as the temporal horizon of this self's concrete past. A self exists by projecting a future in the present in light of its past. Or as Kierkegaard put it, the self lives forward but understands backward. This temporal feature of selfhood is to a degree intuitively grasped by all men. Yet, it is strangely deemphasized in most theories of the self where it is usually discussed only in connection with the problem of reidentification of selves. The Jamesian theory on the other hand, recognizes the primacy of the self's unique temporalization and tries to account for it with a dynamic theory of consciousness that is faithful to the "fact of coalescence of next with next in concrete experience."[224]

The historical, dynamic nature of the self was not really attended to in the traditional theories of selfhood. The Spiritualists, Transcendentalists and Associationists

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[223] Ibid., I, p. 228.

[224] James, A Pluralistic Universe, p. 147.

despite their differences were all obsessed with finding within the self a core that was impervious to change, development, or growth. In pursuit of this goal, each of these approaches to the self tended to ignore the historical character of the self. James on the other hand was obsessed only with faithfully describing the self just as it revealed itself in experience. In this way, James came to recognize that the self exhibited a mixture of sedimentation and spontaneity. For James, the flux and flow quality of the self is primordial and to ignore it is to lose sight of the nature of the self altogether.

One need only ponder one's life in the following manner suggested by James to realize that the self is nothing frozen in time.

> From one year to another we see things in new lights. What was unreal has grown real, and what was exciting is insipid. The friends we used to care the world for are shrunken to shadows; the women, once so divine, the stars, the woods, and the waters, how now so dull and common; the young girls that brought an aura of infinity, at present hardly distinguishable existences; the pictures so empty; and as for the books, what was there to find so mysteriously significant in Goethe, or in John Mill so full of weight?[225]

The soul and the transcendental ego are both appealing concepts in that they seem to offer us a persisting permanent self that stretches unaltered all the way from the moment of conception to the moment of death (and for those who identify

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[225] Principles, I, pp. 227-228.

the soul and the self beyond even death). But before we embrace either of these solutions, we ought to consider whether experience reveals the self as having such enduring permanence. I for one, can't imagine much in common between my present self and the self of my infant days that was reported to me by my parents or between either of these and the possible future self of my senile days when I may not be capable of even recognizing the members of my own family. When I reflect upon my experiences, I don't discover any absolute core of permanence. I find rather a flux of perceptions, feelings, thoughts and desires. Amid this flux there does appear to be one comparatively stable structure and that is the feeling of embodiment. My body seems to be in one way or another related to all my experiences. Yet, even here there is not found that core of absolute permanence. My body changes. Its cells are constantly being replaced by new cells. It both grows and decays. That old photograph of my ten pound body, for example, doesn't seem to have many affinities with any of my wedding photographs. In my own case I can't find the persisting permanent self that is spoken of by both the Spiritualists and the Transcendentalists.

The Associationists rightly recognized that there was no absolute permanence to be found in experience. They, however, wrongly believed that there ought to be if there is going to exist a self. Hume concluded that the self was a

fiction. He should have concluded that the self is a dynamic process involving both sedimentation and spontaneity, that it is mutable and capable of both growth and decay, that it is in short, historical.

James offers us the following penetrating description of the self's mutability:

> In the first place, although its changes are gradual, they become in time great. ...Well from infancy to old age, this assemblage of feelings, most constant of all, is yet prey to slow mutation. Our powers, bodily and mental, change at least as fast. Our possessions notoriously are perishable facts. ...The identity which the I discovers, as it surveys this long procession, can only be a relative identity, that of a slow shifting in which there is always some common ingredient retained.[226]

The Behaviorists can not provide a satisfactory account of the historical character of the self because for them there is no retention of the past or projection of a future. For the Behaviorists, events merely leave an altered physical organism. Just as a nail once bent tends to bend again when hit without memory or projection. The bent nail example is B. F. Skinner's own way of illustrating the effect of experience on man. Skinner maintains that there can only be a response to a present reinforcer. Distant goals, Skinner insist are achievable only by means of a series of conditioned reinforcers not because there is a self that can project into the future a different state of affairs than is

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[226] Ibid., I, p. 351.

given in the present. In the hands of Behaviorists like Skinner the self loses all its historicity and becomes a chain of "it" processes. Their view of consciousness as a mere ephiphenomena prevents them from recognizing sedimentation and spontaneity as real aspects of being a self. The Behaviorists are committed to treating the self as just another thing in the physical world where time is a series of nows and each now is equivalent to any other now. The self is, however, not a thing, and its existence is not confined to a "now" but is rather spread out through all three dimensions of time simultaneously.

James grounds the self's historicity in the temporalistic and caring character of consciousness. The continuous acts of appropriation by the present active pulse of consciousness makes possible the accumulative and stable character of the self. Here we have the self's sedimentation. Care, the selective character of consciousness makes possible the growing dynamic character of the self through both its interpretation of its past and its projection of its future. Here we have the self's spontaneity. The self reveals itself in experience as continuously involving both sedimentation and spontaneity. It is a free force that always finds itself moving in a particular direction which it can sustain or alter for it has no destiny. The Jamesian self conceived as a subjective-objective temporal process (I$\leftrightharpoons$ME) takes into account the

experiential growth and decay as well as the stability that is exhibited by the self. The Spiritualists and the Transcendentalists treat the self more or less as if it was a finished product from the moment of its appearance while the Behaviorists view it as a finished product once it is thoroughly conditioned by its environment. Each of the alternative views fail to appreciate the fact that "Experience is remolding us every moment..."[227] and that "The problem with ...man is less what act he shall now choose to do, than what being he shall now resolve to become."[228] James on the other hand offers us a theory of the self that recognizes the fact that the self is more a "becoming" than a "block of being."

To use the term "becoming" to describe the self is to emphasize the fact that the self is future orientated. The temporal character of the self is reflected not only in the past horizon of consciousness but also in consciousness's projection of a future horizon. James refers to one's projected future self as one's potential self. Thus a person identifies not only with one's past ME but also with one's future ME. He notes that with regard to each of the three areas of the ME, material, social and spiritual, each of us distinguishes between the present and actual and the future and potential. Also pointed out is the fact most of our

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[227] Ibid., I, p. 228.

[228] Ibid., I, p. 277.

attention and energy is directed towards the future ME for we are beings who live forward. To understand a particular concrete self, it is not enough to know its past; one must also know its dreams and aspirations, i.e. its projected future ME. Like Sartre, James believes each self is a being-towards-some-ideal, a project in the making. The future ME that consciousness projects forms a genuine part of one's present existence. This future directed character of the self was ignored by the Behaviorists who saw only the past history of reinforcement and by the Spiritualists and Transcendentalists who sought only permanence for the self. Unlike these alternative theories the Jamesian theory recognizes the fact that the self is more than a sedimentated past, it is also an intended future. A self is always "on the way," always "becoming." As Craig Eisendrath has pointed out, the Jamesian self is primarily a "scheme of intention" and what it is intending "is its own future."[229]

Like Merleau-Ponty, James recognized that the self was not a "thing" nor a "transcendental subject" but rather that which seemed to possess features of both for it manifested itself as a "becoming," as if it lay between being and non-being. Because of these unique features Merleau-Ponty has called the self "time." James does not refer to the self as time, but he does claim that the "specious present" which is

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[229]Craig Eisendrath, The Unifying Moment (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 128.

the present pulse of subjectivity is the ground of all experiential time for through it all three dimensions of time are felt simultaneously. James recognized, with Merleau-Ponty, that time can not be derived from its parts. All three dimensions, past, present and future, must be felt together in what James calls the specious present and Merleau-Ponty calls the field of presence. James describes it this way: "In short, the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time."[230] Both James and Merleau-Ponty, who studied James extensively, recognized that the self is not a substance but is rather a subjective-objective temporal process.

To say that the self is historical means among other things that it has a unique stream of past experiences that are currently influencing its present activity including its activity of experiencing. Non-reproductive memory, i.e. sedimentation, is always guiding our spontaneity and its projection of a future. James was fond of quoting Kierkegaard's remark, "We live forward, we understand backward."[231] Like Kierkegaard, James believed that the self is stretched out through time. Our sedimentated past is presently affecting the meaning of everything in our present

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[230] Ibid., I, p. 574.

[231] James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 121.

situation. Our present experience of the world is a function of our sedimentated interests, concepts, and habits of perception. We tend to ignore the influence of our sedimentated past when we don't actively recall it and reflect upon it, but the influence of past experiences is continuous and growing and so the self is accumulative. To illustrate this point let us ponder how it was possible for me to write the previous sentence. The sentence would never have been written had I not available to me in the present a sedimentated vocabulary, grammar, rules of punctuation, a specific knowledge regarding the self, an awareness of what I wrote in the preceding sentence, and the already acquired physical skill of writing itself. Though I need all this past to write the sentence, recollection is not required for the self is so intrinsically historical that its past is always already there in its present. Each mental state is for James "...a record in which the eye of Omniscience might read all the frozen history of its owner."[232]

It is hard to imagine this condensation of our past in our lived present. We have no good models or metaphors to describe it. James does, however, offer us the following: "There is thus a sort of perspective projection of past objects upon present consciousness, similar to that of wide landscapes upon a camera-screen."[233] Though this enormous

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[232] Principles, I, p. 228.

[233] Ibid., I, p. 593.

accumulative character of experience is hard to conceive, it is nevertheless clear that selfhood is inconceivable without it.

Robert Ehman is in agreement with James here. He writes, "The nature of our past experiences now affects the meaning that objects have for us; and unless we had already learned certain concepts, acquired certain interests, and had certain emotional reactions to things, we would not now experience them in the manner that we do."[234]

There is a special phenomenon which testifies to the mutability of the self in a dramatic way. The phenomenon that I have in mind is that abnormality known as multiple personalities. Such cases of selfhood are unexplainable by those theories of the self that stress permanence above all else. Cases of multiple personalities suggest that a single body can on rare occasions enjoy the presence of more than one self. Assuming such strange happenings are possible and the empirical evidence for it is growing stronger all the time, it weakens the case for those theories that ignore the dynamic character of the self.[235] First of all, two selves per body suggest that the self is not to be identified with the physiological mass known as the body. Second, two selves per body suggest that the self is not to be identified with

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[234]Ehman, "William James and the Structure of the Self," op. cit., p. 268.

[235]See R. D. Laing, The Divided Self and John Perry, "Can the Self Divide?", Journal of Philosophy, (September, 1972).

the soul for souls are by definition unsplitable and come one to a body. Third, two selves per body suggest that the self is not to be identified with the pure ego for like the soul it too is by definition unsplitable and comes one to a body. The phenomenon of multiple selves favors none of the traditional approaches to selfhood but instead suggests a process view of the self such as James offers us.

Let us now consider how the Jamesian account could handle the case of multiple selves. It is possible in the Jamesian theory for the field of the Me to hold uncompatible objects. Since in principle any object can enter the self field by being cared for by consciousness, it is possible for the contents of one's objective self to come into conflict. The incompatibility of certain parts of my empirical ME may lead to a splitting of the ME. The normal tendency is toward integrating and unifying the various parts of the "me", but one can imagine situations where the reverse happens and a fissure is created in one's objective self. Imagine if you will a woman who has conflicting aspirations, one towards being a nun and another towards motherhood. It is conceivable that if both aspirations are nourished and grow in equal strength that a split in the self may occur so that multiple personalities would be the result. Such an event could be represented symbolically in the following way:

Normal (1) Conflict (2) Split Personality (3)

Figure three shows how it is possible for a single body to support more than one self. Here each I⟺ME represents a self, i.e. a single unified subjective-objective process. The split would be the result of the formation of conflicting fields of care.

The above is not meant as a scientific solution to the mystery of multiple personalities. Our intention here is only to show that the existence of such phenomena would not invalidate the Jamesian self as it would those traditional theories that exaggerate the permanence to be found in selfhood and fail to appreciate the historical and dynamic character of the self.

From what has been said so far it should be apparent that the Jamesian theory does a better job of recognizing the dynamic temporal character of the self when compared to any of the traditional alternative views. To the extent that it better attends to this particular experiential fact of selfhood, the Jamesian theory offers us additional evidence of its superiority. But before passing judgment in this regard, we must consider certain major objections concerning James' treatment of the self's temporality.

Although one of the merits of the Jamesian theory is that it recognizes and takes into account the historical character of the self, certain objections can be raised regarding the principles it employs to account for the self's unique temporal structure. The main problem concerns the theory of appropriation by pulses of consciousness. Regarding his theory of appropriation, James is at times both vague and inconsistent. Here once again we must make an effort to amend his confusing richness while constructing a sound theory of the self based on James' insights and the interrelationship of these insights and their necessary implications.

In the chapter on the self, James describes the act of appropriation by the present pulse of consciousness as not being automatic but involving a judgment of identity based on a feeling of warmth and intimacy. Here he writes that each new pulse of consciousness, "knows its own predecessor, and finding it 'warm,' in the way we have described, greets it, saying: 'Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me.'"[236] But in the same chapter he also describes it as being an automatic process. "But the essence of the matter to common-sense is that the past thoughts never were wild cattle, they were always owned. The Thought does not capture them, but as soon as it comes into existence it finds them already its own."[237] Which position are we to regard as

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[236] Principles, I, p. 322.

[237] Ibid., I, p. 321.

representing James' ultimate position regarding the act of appropriation?

James' treatment of consciousness in his chapter on the stream of thought which preceded his discussion of the self suggest that the act of appropriation is automatic. The third trait of thought declares that consciousness is always continuous. If the act of appropriation was not automatic but involved a judgment in which rejection was always possible, then the third trait of thought is false.

> Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.[238]

James treatment of our experience of time which came after his discussion of the self also suggest that the act of appropriation is automatic. According to James' famous doctrine of the "specious present" there is always a retention of the past and a projection of the future in each living present. If the act of appropriation was not automatic but involved a judgment in which rejection was always possible, then James' doctrine of the specious present is false.

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[238] Ibid., I, p. 233.

> These lingerings of old objects, these incomings of new, are the germs of memory and expectation, the retrospective and the prospective sense of time. They give that continuity to consciousness without which it could not be called a stream.[239]

The following words from Essays in Radical Empiricism also seem to suggest the pre-reflective character of the act of appropriation.

> The conjunctive relation that has given most trouble to philosophy is the co-conscious transition, so to call it, by which one experience passes into another when both belong to the same self. About the facts there is no question. My experiences and your experiences are 'with' each other in various external ways but mine pass into mine, and yours pass ino yours in a way in which yours and mine never pass into each other....Personal histories are processes of change in time, and the change itself is one of the things immediately experienced.[240]

The view that the act of appropriation is pre-reflective and automatic is the position that is most compatible with James' other theories concerning the self, consciousness, and time. It is therefore the position adopted in our Jamesian theory of the self.

But though the accumulation of experience is an automatic process, the sedimentation that is thus available to us is still open to interpretation. In other words, how we wish to view our appropriate past is still up to us.

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[239] Ibid., I, pp. 571-572.

[240] James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 25.

We must now look at another apparent inconsistency in James theory of the act of appropriation. James seems to maintain at the same time that consciousness always reveals itself as a stream and that consciousness consist of continuous pulses of appropriating thought. How can he hold both these views? Marcus Peter Ford thinks James is wrong in adopting both views. He writes, "He [James] realized that according to his analysis the self must be a series of thoughts, each in some manner really distinct from past thoughts of the same self, and yet he could not introspectively verify that individual thought exist... According to experience "thinking goes on." There is a stream of thoughts, not a chain."[241]

James is really not being inconsistent here. If new pulses of thought are constantly appearing and appropriating past pulses of thought, consciousness "becomes" a flowing stream. The stream exist from the standpoint of the present pulse of appropriating thought. Without pulses of appropriating thought, consciousness could not manifest itself as a stream and our experience would be of unrelated impressions without even the feeling of succession. In other words, the stream of thought presupposes the existence of an appropriating present pulse of consciousness.

Regarding the present pulse of thought and how its appropriation makes possible the stream character of

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[241]Marcus Peter Ford, William James' Philosophy, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), p. 22.

consciousness, James writes:

> It appropriates to itself, it is the actual focus of accretion, the hook from which the chain of past selves dangles, planted firmly in the Present, which alone passes for real, and thus keeping the chain from being a purely ideal thing. Anon the hook itself will drop into the past with all it carries, and then be treated as an object and appropriated by a new Thought in the new present which will serve as living hook in turn.[242]

Thus we see that it is the present pulse of consciousness which serves as the anchor for the entire past stream which would vanish but for its act of appropriation. It is through appropriation that consciousness becomes a stream and it is the present pulse of consciousness that does the appropriating. Thus I see no problem with James maintaining that there are continuous pulses of appropriating thought and also that consciousness reveals itself as a stream.

There is another difficulty concerning James' theory of appropriation which we must consider. In the form of a question it reads as follows: "How can the present pulse of consciousness which has no knowledge of itself and is as James says 'the darkest in the whole series,' appropriate anything to itself?" This is one difficulty that James clearly anticipated. His solution to the problem is simple. "Its (the present pulse of thought) appropriations are therefore less to itself than to the most intimately felt part of its

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[242] Principles, I, p. 323.

present Object, the body...."[243] He states the same position once again in a footnote. "The sense of my bodily existence, however, obscurely recognized as such, may then be the absolute original of my conscious selfhood, the fundamental perception that I am. All appropriations may be made to it, by a Thought not at the moment immediately cognized by itself."[244]

We have shown that the difficulties discussed above are not disastrous for James' theory of appropriation. Nevertheless, the act of appropriation remains for us a rather obscure process.[245] This is as it should be for we lack "knowledge about" the appropriating present pulse of consciousness. Subjectivity itself is only felt as we live through it. When we try to grasp the present appropriating thought in reflection, we transform this pulse of subjectivity into a mere object. That the condition of all objectivity is not subject to objectification should not surprise us. This is why it is "the darkest of the whole series." James acknowledges the obscurity of the act of appropriation. He writes, "The only point that is obscure is the act of appropriation itself."[246] But James adds that this process is much less obscure than the imagined soul or transcendental

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[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid., p. 324 n.

[245] A. J. Ayer regards this as the "chief weakness" of James' account of the self. op. cit., p. 278.

[246] James, Principles, I, p. 323.

ego which is not even felt and moreover it does the job that they were invented to explain.

> It is impossible to discover any verifiable features in personal identity, which this sketch does not contain, impossible to imagine how any transcedent non-phenomenal sort of an Arch-Ego, were he there, could shape matters to any other result, or be known in time by any other fruit, then just this production of a stream of consciousness each 'section' of which should know, and knowing, hug to itself and adopt, all those that went before -- thus standing as the representative of the entire past stream; and which should similarly adopt the objects already adopted by any portion of this spiritual stream.[247]

Unlike its traditional rivals, the Jamesian theory does not try to disguise the intrinsic historical character of the self. James feels that it is time we recognize rather than camouflage the "becoming" character of the self. Experience reveals the self as being not pure permanence but rather a dynamic temporal process involving both sedimentation and spontaneity. This dynamic process is made possible through continuous acts of appropriation by consciousness. We have shown that the major objections to the theory of appropriation are without merit. We have admitted that there is a certain unavoidable obscurity regarding the act of appropriation by the present pulse of subjectivity, but in so doing we have noted that this obscurity is nothing compared to the mystery surrounding the alternative explanations which posit unexperiencable permanence. With regard to the experiential

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[247] Ibid., p. 322.

feature called temporality, the Jamesian theory of the self must be regarded as more adequate than the traditional alternative explanations.

The Jamesian theory not only does a better job of recognizing the primordial role of care in selfhood, it is also superior in its treatment of the undeniable temporal character of the self. We must now evaluate the Jamesian theory in terms of another experiential feature of selfhood, agency.

C. AGENCY

> Our acts, our turning places, where we seem to ourselves to make ourselves and grow, are the parts of the world to which we are the closest, the parts of which our knowledge is most intimate and complete. Why should we not take them at their face-value?[248]

At the heart of James' conception of the self is the notion of creative effort. Like P. F. Strawson, James sees an intimate connection between the concept of self and the notion of agency. He felt that the traditional view of the self as primarily owner of experiences, as an enduring substance which somehow binds all experiences together is mistaken. Yes, the self is the knower, but it is this because it is primarily an actor. In contrasting various features of selfhood with the self's creative effort James writes, "But the effort seems to belong to an altogether different realm, as if it were the substantive thing which we are, and those were but externals which we carry."[249]

The notion of agency is implicit in James' criteria for determining the presence of mind. His criteria is "the pursuance of future ends and choice of means for their attainment."[250] Agency is for James the indubitable

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[248] James, Pragmatism, (1907 edition), pp. 287-288.

[249] Principles, II, p. 1181.

[250] Ibid., I, p. 21.

expression of the Self.

The self is not simply an object that appears in reflection, and it is not simply a collection of personality traits. The self is an agent. All purposeful human action is action of a self. To deny this is to make all such acts impersonal and beyond praise or blame as the beating of one's heart. This "beyond dignity" approach is embraced by B. F. Skinner and the Behaviorists, but there are others who do so unwittingly when they neglect to emphasize the active character of the self and treat it as if it were simply another object in an anonymous field of experience.[251]

James has steadfastly insisted that the self has causal efficacy and is a real active and spontaneous force in the world. The self functions dynamically. Its actions include bodily self-seeking, social self-seeking, and spiritual self-seeking, and each of these are acts of an actual self motivated by a projected potential self. The self is not a shell created by the past acts of some non-personal agent. The self is a social, historical, and caring agent. Here the commonsense view must prevail; the self is a doer as well as a knower. James would applaud the following observation of Professor Macmurray, "The field of our enquiry, then, is the

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[251]Unfortunately this view of the self as an object for an active but impersonal consciousness is attributed to James by Bruce Wilshire in his William James and Phenomenology: A Study of "The Principles of Psychology." Wilshire ignores a great deal of James in order to bring James into the phenomenological camp of Husserl. What he ignores here is this: for James consciousness is personal and the self is the source of creative effort.

field of the personal, and we have to survey it from the standpoint of action, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the personal."[252]

The myth of the non-active self arises when consciousness is artificially separated from the self. Consciousness can be analyzed in this manner but this analysis doesn't destroy the fact that consciousness is always personalized consciousness and exist only as the subjective dimension of that irreducible reality known as the self. It is always the self which acts in the world. An agent is never an impersonal transcendental consciousness nor that purely physical mass called the body. This becomes clear once we realize that (1) consciousness can act upon its environment only by means of the body, and (2) the body qua body has no ends and thus no reason or motivation to act at all without consciousness supplying ends. An agent is always an embodied consciousness in the world, which is to say an agent is always a self. It is the self which acts on its environment guided by its own interests and the ends which it has formulated for itself. To those who deny self agency James replies that there is no other kind of agency. In Aristotelian terms James believes our ideas function as final causes. Thus it is only within "the total fact of personal activity" that "final and efficient causes coalesce."[253]

It is at the core of the self that James locates "the

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[252]Jon Macmurray, Persons in Relation, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1961, p. 24.

[253]James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 107.

source of effort and attention."[254] Here is the place "from which appear to emanate the fiats of the will."[255] It is because consciousness is essentially teleological that the self is an active and creative force in the world. The self's freedom lies in selecting those objects or parts of objects to which it will attend. "Each of us dichotomizes the Kosmos in a different place."[256] It is the interest and selectivity of consciousness which forms one world of meaning out of many possible worlds.

> [consciousness] functions exclusively for the sake of ends that do not exist at all in the world of impressions we receive by way of our senses, but are set up by our emotional and practical subjectivity altogether. It is a transformer of the world of our impressions into a totally different world, -- the world of our conception; and the transformation is effected in the interests of our volitional nature, and for no other purpose whatsoever.[257]

James would not deny that consciousness serves a biological end. He would deny, however, that its function is merely that of contributing to survival. For consciousness no sooner comes than it creates its own ends, and these ends greatly surpass that common concern for survival. Moreover it brings with it the power of determination and moral

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[254] Principles, I, p. 285.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid., I, p. 278.

[257] James, "Reflex Action as Theism" (1879) in The Will to Believe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 94-95.

effort, and thus making it possible for an ideal to occasional displace a concern for survival.

Gary Kessler has argued that it is this teleological character of the Jamesian consciousness which kept James from making the idealist turn of Husserl and led him to emphasize the body and practical action which in turn led him to his famous theory of pragmatism. Kessler writes:

> In Husserl the emphasis is on the meaning - bestowing function of the transcendental ego. In James the emphasis is placed on the freedom of the individual interacting with the world. He argues that the line between the activity of the mind as a meaning - bestowing agent and its passivity as a receptor of sense impressions should not be drawn where ideas interact with experience, but rather where the mind chooses to attend to certain sensations and to ignore others. This signals an important difference between James' notion of intentionality and Husserl's, James sees intentionality as primarily teleological. It involves purpose, choice, goals, and interests. It is only a short step from this position to pragmatism.[258]

For James, the effort of willing is the effort of our impulsive, habitual and obsessional stream of consciousness. It is the effort of clearing away all the conflicting ideas and leaving one purpose solely in command. Volitional effort is effort of attention. Action is the result of consistent controlled thought. "The essential achievement of the will, in short, when it is most 'voluntary' is to attend to a

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[258]Kessler, p. 109.

difficult object and hold it fast before the mind."[259] We don't will ourselves to act; we will ourselves to focus our thought, to attend to an idea, and this in turn leads to physical action. The self is the agent because through its structure of interests it is the source of "selective attention," i.e. the source of our ability to resolutely sustain attention to an idea.

Ideas naturally tend to lead to action and bodily movement. When they don't, its because of the presence of conflicting ideas. Our freedom and our agency lies in the power of the self to focus its attention on objects that may at the moment be regarded as unpleasant and so difficult to attend to. James illustrates his point with the example of the difficulty of getting out of a warm bed on a cold morning.[260] Usually in such situations, after pondering the competing alternative courses of action open to us, we simply find ourselves standing on the cold floor with our thoughts occupied with the responsibilities of the day. Our rising from our bed followed naturally from our attending to this idea rather than the competing and highly tempting idea of the warm bed. Consciousness naturally tends to express itself in bodily movement for the body is its way of being-in-the-world.

James theory of a selective and creative consciousness

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[259] Principles, II, p. 1166.

[260] Ibid., II, p. 1132.

must be understood not in a Kantian sense, but rather in conjunction with the special role he attributes to the body. The self is not a disembodied ego that constructs its world through a priori categories. The self is immersed in the world and it is only because it is so situated that there exist for it concrete possibilities for action. The initial basic structuring of the experienced world is grounded in the body.

> The world experienced (otherwise called the 'field of consciousness') comes at all times with our body as its centre, centre of vision, centre of action, centre of interest. Where the body is here; when the body acts is 'now'; what the body touches is 'this'; all other things are 'there' and 'then' and 'that'. These words of emphasized position imply a systematization of things with reference to a focus of action and interest which lies in the body;....[261]

James sees the body as the condition for practical action. It is the body which labors, points, gestures and talks. The self's agency in the world is always through bodily action. Even our knowing activities in this world are not purely epistemological for our knowledge always is based upon the needs and interests of the embodied self.

> So far as 'thoughts' and 'feelings' can be active, their activity terminates in the activity of the body, and only through first arousing its activities can they begin to change those of the rest of the world. The body is the storm center, the origin of co-ordinates, the constant place of stress in all

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[261] James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 86 n.

> that experience-train. Everything circles around it, and is felt from its point of view.[262]

John Macmurray shares James' view regarding the need for a philosophical recovery of the body. He writes:

> The effect of transferring the center of reference to action, and at the same time its sufficient justification, is that man recovers his body and becomes personal. When he is conceived as an agent, all his activities, including his reflective activities, fall naturally into place in a functional unity. Even his emotions, instead of disturbance to the placidity of thought, take their place as necessary motive which sustain his activities, including his activity of thinking.[263]

Actions not words reveal one's self to the other and to oneself. One finds out who he is only as he acts in the world with others. James points out that our self-feelings in this world, "depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do."[264] Deeds testify to my true field of care and so it is in my actions that my self becomes manifest to the other and to me. James eloquently declares the primacy of action in the following passage from his Principles of Psychology:

> No matter how full a reservoir of maxims one may possess, and no matter how good one's sentiments may be, if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to act one's character may remain

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[262] Ibid.

[263] Macmurray, op. cit. p. 12.

[264] Principles, I, p. 296.

> entirely unaffected for the better. With mere good intentions, hell is proverbially paved....Every time a resolve or a fine glow of feeling evaporates without bearing practical fruit is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. There is no more contemptible type of character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed.[265]

James views the self as an agent because experience reveals our conscious states as positing ends and directing our actions in terms of those ends. James mainly argues for his agent view of the self by comparing it to a parallelist view of the self. He gives a number of reasons for rejecting the conscious automaton theory which treats consciousness as a mere epiphenomenon. We have discussed these reasons in an earlier section. The following constitute a summary of James' reasons for believing that the self is a real agent in the world: (1) The efficacy of consciousness is directly experienced. (à la Descartes.) Here we have knowledge by direct acquaintance of it rather than "knowledge about it." (2) The efficacy of consciousness is the only way to account for the enormous correlations between pleasure and beneficial activity and between pain and detrimental activity. (3) The efficacy of consciousness is the only way to account for the enormous correlation between the feeling of effort and non-automatic responses. (4) The emergence of novelty in the world suggest that the self is a real agent. (5) Our

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[265] Ibid., I, p. 129.

inability to completely comprehend the relationship between thought and matter is not adequate evidence of its non-existence and so it is not a disproof of the self's agency. (6) A theory of the self must not ignore how this notion functions in one's daily life and the value it carries there and consequences that flow from it.

None of the major traditional alternative approaches to the self recognized agency as the distinguishing characteristic of the self. The Spiritualists, the Transcendentalists and the Associationists regarded the self as primarily the "knower" rather than as the "doer." Although each of these philosophical camps recognized that the self was an agent, they each constructed their theories of the self as if it was primarily the spectator of the world rather than a participant in the world. Their general neglect of the self's agency began when a meditative Descartes turned his thoughts inward and pronounced, "I am a thinking thing." In giving primacy to the "I think" this philosophical tradition lost sight of the "I do."

The Spiritualists recognized the efficacy of the self and James says at one point that this is what makes the soul theory more attractive than some of the other alternatives. But though he finds it attractive, James rejects the notion of a spiritual substance because it is inexperiencable and superflous. The soul theory also creates additional problems regarding the self's agency in the world. In viewing the

self as primarily mind, i.e. essentially the knower to whom the world appears, the self's agency in the physical world became problematic. The soul being an independent and radically different kind of substance than that which composes the physical world makes it very difficult to develop an adequate account of the self's agency in the world. It is not a question of finding the point where these two contrary substances interact as Descartes apparently thought with his "pineal gland" hypothesis. The problem is that given the character of each substance (for example one in space the other not) a point of interaction seems impossible. The Spiritualists recognize the agency of the self, but they formulate it in such a way that its agency in this world becomes problematic.

The Associationist's "brick-and-mortar" approach to experience also made the discovery of an active self impossible. Hume analyzed the self in terms of a passive succession of discrete ideas and impressions. Despite some excellent critical insights concerning the problem of personal identity, Hume failed to give an adequate account of the self. His basic assumption that experience is atomistic made it impossible for him to find the dynamic self that James discovered. Hume did not realize that in explaining away self identity in terms of our "feigning" such a unity into our discrete impressions, he was already assuming an "I" which required a greater continuity and activity than was

allowed by his account of the self. Hume's disjointed self could not account for the initiative and creative effort that are called for by the "feigning." James, however, recognized creative effort as lying at the very core of the self and because of this unlike Hume he gave the body a privileged place in his account of the self. Hume still under the influence of the Spiritualist's tradition that he criticized, regarded the problem of the self as being mainly the identity of mind. In so doing, he too put the emphasis on the "I think" rather than the "I do." Had Hume's analysis focused upon the body, he might have realized that the self is not that sought for single impression which remains always identically the same, but is rather the source of purposeful activity.

The agency character of the self is also not dealt with adequately in the Transcendentalists' account. James viewed Kant as tacitly accepting Hume's "atomistic" theory of experience and inventing his transcendental string to tie it up. James rejected the Kantian Ego not only because it couldn't be found in the stream of experience but also because it wasn't an active enough self. James saw the notion of activity as lying at the very core of our sense of self, and he did not view this activity in the Kantian sense as being primarily epistemological. The transcendental ego is in no position to do the work of a real self which James sees as making judgments about how to act.

> The soul truly explains nothing; the 'synthesis'; which she performed, were simply taken ready-made, and clapped on to her as expressions of her nature taken after the fact; but at least she has some semblance of nobility and outlook. She was called active; might select; was responsible, and permanent in her way. The Ego is simply nothing: as ineffectual and windy an abortion as Philosophy can show.[266]

James' message is clear: the self is where the action is. The self is much more than the subject of experience; it is also an agent in the experienced world. The self is not transcedent, but is rather situated in the world. The self conceived simply as "the knower," as a non-agent is a myth. There is no "knower" that is not also "doer." The self exists only in its agency, and even its cognitive acts have their ultimate basis in the self's agency in the lived-world. "My thinking," says James, "is first and last and always for the sake of doing, and I can only do one thing at a time."[267]

Where the Spiritualists, Transcendentalists and Associationists recognize the self's agency but fail to account for it and appreciate its importance, the Behaviorists refuse to recognize it at all for it is precluded by their single mechanistic explanation of behavior. In their deterministic closed universe there is no room for real agency for here all action is actually re-action and nothing lies outside the endless physical chain of cause and effect. In clarifying

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[266] Ibid., I, p. 345.

[267] Ibid., II, p. 960.

James' position, we have already discussed the Behaviorist's position with regard to the self's agency. But the Behaviorists raise a major problem concerning James's view of the self as agent. It is the same old problem that has plagued all believers of an efficacious consciousness. James doesn't explain how consciousness and matter interact. We must now consider whether this is disastrous for his theory of an active self.

Although the six reasons stated on page 235 can be viewed as accumulative evidence for believing that the self is a real agent and consciousness is efficacious, they do not tell us how consciousness is efficacious. In other words, James position is mainly defined in reference to the opposing deterministic view of the self that sees consciousness as an impotent epiphenomenon. James was well aware of the lack of a positive account of his interactionist view. He felt, however, that an understanding of this process lies beyond the scope of human reason. Before it, says James "our reason can only avow its impotence."[268]

But James insist that man is more than a rational spectator, that he is also an active participant in the world. He points out that rationality in its theoretical form is itself a sentiment involving a passion for simplification and distinguishing whose justification lies in

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[268]James, "The Feeling of Effort," Collected Essays and Reviews, ed. by R. B. Rerry, New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1920, p. 216.

removing doubts concerning the consequences of future actions. James therefore believes that if reason alone can't decide the issue of human freedom or an efficacious consciousness this is no reason to deny it. He notes that if we deny the existence of all that we can not explain then the scientific community is going to have to dispense with its notion of physical causality for that too has not been satisfactorily explained.

In the "Dilemma of Determinism" James shows why the question of human freedom is insoluble from any strict theoretical point of view. Science which only deals with facts can't speak with authority regarding the existence of human freedom for the whole issue concerns the reality not of facts but rather the reality of future possibilities. Here the theoretical point of view must be supplemented by the practical point of view which is in fact the natural point of view of the self as agent. It is from this practical point of view that James proclaims the self to be a free agent in the following passage:

> I thus disclaim openly on the threshold all pretension to prove to you that the freedom of the will is true. The most I hope is to induce some of you to follow my own example in assuming it true, and acting as if it were true. If it be true, it seems to me that this is involved in the strict logic of the case. Its truth ought not to be forced willynilly down our indifferent throats. It ought to be freely espoused by men who can equally well turn their backs upon it. In other words, our first act of freedom, if we are free, ought in all

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[269]James, "The Dilemma of Determinism" in Essays in Pragmatism, ed. by Alburey Castell, New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966, pp. 37-38.

> inward propriety to be to affirm that we are free.[269]

James believes that an adequate theory of the self will take into account the entire range of human experiences which include not merely cognitive acts and the sentiment of rationality, but also actions based upon interests of a practical, aesthetic, ethical or religious nature. Only a theory of the self as agent can welcome and embrace these various interests of the whole man. It is for this reason that James believes we ought to reject those theories of the self which deny or underplay the agency character of the self.

After a crisis of spirit in his own life, James struggled with the question of human freedom. It is clear from what he wrote in his diary on April 30, 1870 that this issue of self agency was much more than an academic question for James. He writes,

> My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will .... I will go a step further with my will, not only act with it, but believe as well; believe in my individual reality and creative power. My belief, to be sure, can't be optimistic -- but I will posit life (the real, the good) in the self-governing resistance of the ego to the world. Life shall (be built in) doing and suffering and creating.[270]

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[270] James, The Letters of William James, edited by his son Henry James, Vol. I, Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920, p. 148.

James' view of the self as agent is not unlike Merleau-ponty's position. James too sees the self as both the knower and the doer as both situated in the world and yet surpassing it in that it employs its imagination and agency to transform and complete its world. The self has the power to contribute something to the completion of a universe as yet unfinished. James remarks that the following consideration is forced upon him at every turn: "The knower is an actor and coefficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create."[271]

Our initial and basic understanding of the notion of agency comes from our direct acquaintance with it in our own personal existence. Each of us experiences himself or herself as a real agent. James believes this is true even of the preachers of determinism who "the moment they forget their theoretic abstractions, live in their biographies as much as any one else, and believe as naively that fact even now is making, and that they themselves, by doing 'original work' help to determine what the future shall become."[272] In this section we have shown that one of the great merits of the Jamesian account of the self is that it fully recognizes the fact that the self is primarily an agent in the world and not a mere spectator of it. With respect to this aspect of selfhood we have shown that he gives a more adequate account

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[271]James, Collected Essays and Reviews, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

[272]James, Some Problems of Philosophy, New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1948, p. 152.

than the Spiritualists, Associationists, and Transcendentalists who treated the self as primarily the knower of the world and the Behaviorists who treated the self as just another passive thing in a totally determined world. It was James' recognition of the essential roles played by both a selective consciousness and a lived-body that led James to a more adequate account of the agency character of the self.

D. SOCIALITY

> The innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a Self of the social sort.[273]

Once the emphasis shifts from self as subject to self as agent, it becomes clear that the self is not isolated but rather exists in a dynamic intersubjective world in which relations with other personal agents become a part of his expanding and complex self-field. The size and character of one's social ME is a reflection of one's agency in the shared-lived-world.

James' claim that the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a self of the social sort, should not be viewed as denial of his earlier position that the nuclear self is "spiritual." We must remember by "spiritual" James simply means the active element in the self that which welcomes or rejects, which turns out to be not the soul but rather an embodied consciousness. Thus in stating that the innermost part of the objective self is social, James is simply pointing out the fact that the active self, "that which welcomes or rejects" must be specified not only materially and spiritually but socially as well. The self as agent involves all three MEs for personal activity always takes place within a community. For James there is no self outside

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[273] Principles, I, p. 301.

of "ethical republics."[274] Every self is a member of some "socius."

That our sense of self is based to a great extent upon what we think others think of us, is something that James fully recognized. The Jamesian theory stresses the tremendous significance that social images play in one's sense of identity. James realized that we become in varying degrees the roles we adopt in our social relationships. These roles (father, mother, lawyer, doctor, carpenter, student, etc.) help to define us not merely to others but also to ourselves. Moreover, many of the character traits we attribute to ourselves we learn from others. If a person is told enough times he is ugly, he will naturally come to regard himself as ugly. The other's image of me becomes a part of my self-field because as Sartre points out, I am not simply a being-for-itself, I am also a being-for-others. For James, this relation to the other is an essential and not merely an accidental feature of my being.

> If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met 'cut us dead,' and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruellest bodily tortures would be a relief; for these would make us feel that, however bad might be our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all.[275]

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[274] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" in The Will to Believe, pp. 141-162.

[275] Principles, I, p. 281.

For James, the distinguishing characteristic of the self is agency and agency implies a community of agents. We are not mere spectators of existence we are participants. To deny this is to condemn oneself to solipsism. As an agent the self only exists in dynamic relation with the Other. It is in relation to the Other that the self is constituted. The self exist in its intersubjective relationships.

The self is that which is always separate from the Other but never isolated from the Other. Each and every self is at the same time separate from the other personal agents of his society and related to them. A self always involves an essential relatedness to others. Personal existence is characterized by a "being-with." The self is never a monad.

Every self has its social dimension. James points out that even the most humblest outcast tends to hope for recognition from some "ideal tribunal." "Complete social unselfishness, in other words, can hardly exist; complete social suicide hardly occurs to a man's mind."[276] No self is completely asocial. Even the religious hermit has his ideal potential social self, that is, he cares about his image in the mind of God, "the Great Companion."[277]

James offers us the following description of the self in its social mode:

> Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry

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[276] Ibid., I, p. 302.

[277] Ibid., I, p. 301.

> an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these his images is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these groups....From this there results what practically is a division of the man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere; or it may be a perfectly harmonious division of labor, as where one tender to his children is stern to the soldiers or prisoners under his command.[278]

Perhaps the most dramatic demonstration of the social character of the self is given in the experience of being in love. In such a state it seems nothing else matters but one's image in the mind of the beloved. When one is rejected by such a cherished person, a real eclipse of the self is experienced. Here is the void of unrequited love. Those who have had the experience recognize the truth of James' words. "To his own consciousness he <u>is</u> not, so long as this particular social self fails to get recognition...."[279] The shrinkage and collapse of the self on such occasions clearly suggest there is a large social dimension to the self. Who knows how many lovers have taken their own life because they felt the largest part of their self had already been destroyed? If one denies the essential social character of the self, how can one account for such extreme acts of the self?

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[278] <u>Ibid.</u>, I, pp. 281-282.

[279] <u>Ibid.</u>

The social character of the self does not only manifest itself in the behavior of one who is in love, it is evident in the behavior of all selves. The attitudes of others towards us form such a large part of our empirical self field that there is hardly a human action that does not suggest a social self of some sort. One powerful social self is what is commonly called one's honor. It is his image in the eyes of his own "kind," and James notes that it is one of the most powerful forces that we experience.[280] It is due to this kind of social self that soldiers go bravely to their death, firemen rush into burning buildings and scholars spend years on books that will provide little or no financial reward. The motivation for such acts may be numerous and varied, but one of the things which is at stake in each of these cases is this, "...his image in the eyes of his own 'set' which exalts or condemns him as he conforms or not to certain requirements that may not be made of one in another walk of life."[281] To deny the intrinsic social character of the self is to render as inexplicable a whole range of human behavior similar to that described above.

The above should not be viewed as a denial of the possibility of altruistic acts. It is only a denial that such acts have no reference to one's sense of self. Altruism is not the consequence of bracketing one's own self; it is

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[280] Ibid., I, p. 283.

[281] Ibid., I, p. 282.

rather the result of a self-field that has expanded to include among its cherished objects the welfare of certain others. The difference between an altruist and an egoist is the difference between a small and a large expansive self-field. This fact is reflected in the language we use to describe someone who acts in an egotistical fashion. Conspicuous ego involved behavior tends to illicit the remark "you are being small." Egotistical selves do in fact tend to be tiny by comparison with altruistic selves. As James points out, all narrow people "intrench their Me" while sympathetic people "proceed by the entirely opposite way of expansion and inclusion."[282]

The traditional theories of the self generally neglected the essential social character of the self because of their obsession with the "I think" rather than the "I do." The egocentricity of modern philosophy is in part due to a conception of the self as primarily subject. In reflection we suspend our basic relation to the world which is practical and we isolate ourselves from our essential network of social relations. If the self is examined from this narrow and non-primordial perspective, one is easily led to believe that the self is primarily the subject of experience, and as such isolated from the Other.

James' phenomenological approach to the self reveals that the self is not an isolate at all but is rather

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[282] Ibid., I, p. 298.

intrinsically social. Those images in the minds of others actually form a large part of my objective self. It is these images that make me bloom with pride or make me shrink in shame; it is not my "pure principle of subjectivity." These social images constitute a large part of my total empirical selfhood. James asks, "In what capacity is it that I claim and demand a respectful greeting from you instead of this expression of disdain?"[283] Do I make this claim as a bare subject of experience? as a soul substance? as a transcendental unity of apperception? as simply the owner of experience? James shows that it is not as a bare I that I feel entitled to a respectful greeting but as a self with a concrete social content. A respectful greeting is expected because this self "belongs to a certain family and 'set,'"[284] and "has certain powers, possessions, and public functions, sensibilities, duties, and purposes, and merits and deserts."[285] It is the particular social character of my self that your disdain negates and contradicts. It is the social dimension of my self, my concrete historic ME, that your disdain has pricked and collapsed. One's social images do not lie outside one's self but are a part of the self, and this is why their good fortune causes pride and their misfortune brings shame.

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[283] Ibid., I, p. 306.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Ibid.

The Spiritualists and the Transcendentalists were from the start in no position to appreciate the enormous social character of the self for their permanent fixtures, the soul and the transcendental ego, precede society's influence. Their selves are essentially isolates for whom being-with-others is a mere accidental feature of their existence. They do not realize that one's existence is not enclosed within the boundaries of a monadic ego or substance. The self exists as a field that is always stretched out towards others with their power of approval or disdain, and these attitudes of others towards one are actually incorporated into one's self-field to form a part of one's very being. Unlike the Spiritualists and Transcendentalists, James takes relations seriously. In his radical empiricism, relations are viewed as real as the things they relate.

Because of this extraordinary phenomenological faithfulness to experience, James was able to discover that the self exists in the groups to which it belongs, and in the relation of love and in relation to an Ideal Spectator which for those who pray is the only adequate Socius.[286]

The Associationists also did not recognize the enormous social character of the self. Like the Spiritualists and the Transcendentalists, Hume viewed the self primarily in terms of the mind. When Hume's search for a permanent subject of knowing proved fruitless, he concluded that the self was a

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[286] Ibid., I, p. 301.

fiction. If Hume's analysis had focused upon the body and its actions, he would have had to notice the enormous social character of the self. In concentrating on the mind rather than on the embodied consciousness the traditional approaches lost sight of the social dimension of the self for minds are private in a way bodies never are. In order to grasp the social character of the self, one must give full recognition to the bodily existence of the self.

Unlike classical modern philosophy, today's behaviorists have not neglected the enormous social character of the self. On the contrary, they view the self as entirely social in nature. According to B. F. Skinner the self is merely a repertoire of behavior which is prescribed by a given set of social contingencies. Social Behaviorists like George Mead believe a self arises in a social setting where an organism takes the attitude of the other towards himself. Mead and his disciples maintain that a self arises when language, a purely social invention, is turned inward and one begins to have internal dialogues. Unless the organism adopts the attitudes of others toward himself through internalized conversations, there is no development of a self. For these Behaviorists the social me is not one of three dimensions of the empirical self, it is rather the only dimension. For them the social self is the only self.

The question that now arises is this: Did Mead exaggerate the social character of the self or did James not

fully appreciate the total social nature of the self? This question leads us into a consideration of George Mead's criticism of James. Mead puts forth the Behaviorist objection to the Jamesian self in the following passage from his highly influencial work Mind Self and Society:

> Cooley and James, it is true, endeavor to find the basis of the self in reflexive affective experiences, i.e. experiences involving "self-feeling;" but the theory that the nature of the self is to be found in such experiences does not account for the origin of the self, or of the self-feeling which is supposed to characterize such experiences. The individual need not take the attitudes of others toward himself in these experiences, since these experiences merely in themselves do not necessitate his doing so, and unless he does so, he cannot develop a self; and he will not do so in these experiences unless his self has already originated otherwise, namely, in the way we have been describing. The essences of the self, as we have said, is cognitive: it lies in the internalized conversation of gestures which constitutes thinking, or in terms of which thought or reflection proceeds. And hence the origin and foundation of the self, like those of thinking, are social.[287]

Because of a number of similarities in their positions on the self, a comparison between James and Mead might be helpful here. It should also be noted that the similarities are due to James' great influence on Mead. James' distinction between the "me" and the "I" was adopted by Mead in his theory of the self. His interpretation of these dimensions of the self is, however, quite different from James. Mead

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[287]George Mead, Mind Self and Society, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1934, p. 174.

agrees with James that the "I" never appears in consciousness as an object and that what shows itself in introspection is always the objective self, the ME. He also agrees with James that the "I" is the source of creativity and novelty as well as that which unifies experience. Despite these basic agreements, the differences are great although they may at first sight seem small. In other words, they are seemingly tiny differences with big consequences for selfhood. While for James the "I" is immanent in the stream of consciousness as the present pulse of Thought and is felt and known by direct acquaintance; Mead regards the "I" as necessary for consciousness but transcendent to it and forever unexperienced. While for James the "ME" is material, spiritual, and social; Mead regards the "ME" as entirely social.

According to Mead, James underestimated the social character of the self. Mead insist that a self arises not as a result of a caring consciousness but as a consequence of an organism taking the attitude of the other towards himself. A Jamesian response to Mead might go as follows: Why would an organism bother itself about the attitude of the other toward it, if it didn't already have a special caring attitude with regard to its own existence, an attitude quite unlike any which the other takes toward it? In other words, the process which Mead describes to account for the emergence of self seems to require the more primordial process which James

claimed was responsible for selfhood and which Mead rejects. In the absence of care, it is difficult to see how the approving or disapproving attitudes of my fellow human beings could begin to touch me or be incorporated into my self-field. Mead claims that the self first arises when language is turned inward and one begins to have internal dialogues. It is difficult to see how the self can be a consequence of these internal dialogues, for unless the coversing parties already exist there is not going to be any dialogue. The self can not be a consequence of an internal dialogue for in such a dialogue it is the self conversing with itself. Mead seems to think that the self only exists in and through reflection. But the self is not the effect of introspection but rather it is the self which reflects upon itself.

In the case of Mead the relationship between the I and the ME is not at all clear. He does not seem to realize that the concrete full self is an irreducible whole involving both these dimensions. Although Mead speaks of the "I" and the "ME" aspects of the self, nearly everything he says about the self concerns only the "ME" aspect. Mead admits that the "I" is the active part of the self and a necessary phase of the self, but he has little else to say about it because he insists it transcends experience like the Kantian ego. It is not even clear if the "I" of Mead is really a free active force or simply the place where different environmental factors come together. On this point he is rather ambiguous,

but the general behavioristic thrust of his thought is toward a reductionist approach to both mind and self which sees both phenomena as a product of language which is the gift of one's social environment.

James does not believe like Mead that Society is responsible through language for the existence of mind and self. James also does not believe that all thinking goes on in the form of language. He points out that there is much evidence that deaf mutes have thought processes that are not dependent upon the language symbols of society. James points out that it is difficult to see how something so complex as society and language could arise from an organism that lacked both mind and self. Although James feels that the whole issue of origin here is like that dilemma concerning the chicken and the egg, he tends to lean towards the view that sees the social world as being due to the accumulated influences of individuals of their examples, their initiatives, and their decisions.[288]

> The mutations of societies, then, from generation to generation, are in the main due directly or indirectly to the acts or the examples of individuals whose genius was so adapted to the receptivities of the moment, or whose accidental position of authority was so critical that they became ferments, initiators of movements, setters of precedent or fashion, centers of corruption or destroyers of other persons, whose gifts, had they had free play, would have led society in another direction.[289]

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[288] James, "Great Men and Their Environment" in The Will to Believe, pp. 163-189.

[289] Ibid., p. 170.

The self of Mead tends to passively reflect the social environment in which it is situated. For Mead the distinguishing characteristic of each self is not agency but the individual perspective from which it receives and reflects its environmental influences. As in B. F. Skinner's treatment of personhood, Mead's "I" is not a genuine source of novelty; it is only the place where various old data comes together in new ways. James regards such a treatment as an unjustifiable diminishment of the self. James writes, "Determinists, who deny it, [human freedom] who say that individual men originate nothing, but merely transmit to the future the whole push of the past cosmos of which they are so small an expression, diminish man. He is less admirable, stripped of this creative principle."[290]

Because of the wedge that Mead drives between the I and the ME, and his subsequent neglect of the "I," the self is in effect reduced to a static set of personality traits. The agency character of the self is lost sight of and the self becomes merely something that an organism encounters in reflection when he takes the attitude of the other towards himself. From a Jamesian perspective, Mead's view does an injustice to our basic pre-reflective understanding of the self as an agent. Unlike James, Mead did not recognize the privilege position of the body in selfhood. Mead's ME is

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[290]James, Pragmatism, p. 59.

entirely social in character and the body which forms a part of Mead's self is the body as seen from the outside and judged by others; it is not the directly felt active body of James.

James agrees with Mead that images we think others hold of us form a large part of the objective self. But unlike Mead, James realizes that the self is much more than these images and that these images only form a part of the self because a caring consciousness cherishes them and as a result identifies with them. In other words, the social dimension of the self is grounded in those other dimension of selfhood that we have already discussed and labeled as care, temporality and agency. What Mead fails to realize is that it is not as a mere organism that I take an interest in these images that others have of me, but rather it is because I am a caring, temporal agent in the world that these social images matter to me. What James recognizes and the Behaviorists do not is simply this: A genuine social relation already presupposes the existence of personal beings for if the relation is social it takes the form of I-thou or I-you but never it-it.

Unlike Mead, James recognized the futility of a reductionist approach to the self. To view the self as a mere organism is to already lose sight of the meaning of personal existence. In The Divided Self, R. D. Laing puts forth the same view:

> One's relationship to an organism is different from one's relation to a person. One's description of the other as organism is as different from one's description of the other as person as the description of side of vase is from profile of face; similarly, one's theory of the other as organism is remote from any theory of the other as person. One acts towards an organism differently from the way one acts towards a person. The science of persons is the study of human beings that begins from a relationship with the other as person and proceeds to an account of the other still as person.[291]

The Jamesian self is social. We have argued in this section that with regard to this experiential feature of the self, James gives a more adequate account of the self than the Spiritualists, Transcendentalists and Associationsists who tended to neglect the social character of the self, and a more satisfying account than the Behaviorists who tended to exaggerate the social nature of the self to the point of neglecting its other experiential features. In our discussion of the Behaviorist position, we have shown that the objection that the Jamesian self is not social enough is without merit. The Jamesian theory recognizes the fact that the self is intrinsically a social being without betraying that equally important truth, that the self is a caring, historical, active being.

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[291] R. D. Laing, The Divided Self, p. 21.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART VII

In this section we have argued the merits of the Jamesian theory of the self. We have compared the Jamesian theory with four different major alternative theories with regard to their treatment of four separate experiential features of selfhood. These four experiencable traits of selfhood are as follows: (1) Care is an essential feature of the self. In other words, each and every self unlike any "thing" exhibits an existence that is clearly "for-itself." (2) Temporality is an essential feature of the self. In other words, each and every self unlike any "thing" exist historically in such a manner that it is continuously projecting a future in the present in light of its past. (3) Agency is an essential feature of the self. In other words, each and every self unlike any "thing" initiates action that is guided by its own ends. (4) Sociality is an essential feature of the self. In other words, each and every self unlike any "thing" is intrinsically related to the Other in such a manner that its images in the minds of others forms a part of its very being.

In this section we have argued that Jamesian theory of the self avoids the narrow one sided approach of both Behaviorism and classical modern philosophy. James recognized that the accounts of Descartes, Hume and Kant paid too little attention to the non-cognitive dimension of the

self and that the Behaviorist's account paid too little attention to the subjective dimension of the self, which James regarded as one's concrete, temporal, telic, volitional stream of consciousness.

The Jamesian theory of the self, unlike any of its traditional rivals, is designed in such a way as to accommodate all four of the above mentioned experiential features of personal existence. Furthermore, with its emphasis upon care, it is able to account for the inter-relationship of each of these aspects of selfhood. It is because the self is primarily a process of caring that it is historical, social and active. Without a caring consciousness there is no projection of a future in light of a past; there is only the given. Without this temporality of the subject, self agency is unthinkable for there could be no motivation to act where the given is not contrasted with an alternative future state of affairs. Finally, without caring, historical agents there can be no social realm whatsoever. Care, temporality, agency and sociality are each attributes of personal existence and each entails the presence of all the others. The self can not be caring, or historical, or social or active without being all these all at once and in its entirety. The self reveals itself in experience not as a mere epistemological subject nor as a mere physical organism but always as a caring, historical, social agent. The Jamesian account is the theory that is

most faithful to how the self manifest itself in experience.

The self conceived as an irreducible subjective-objective process of care is a conception of the self as intrinsically ambiguous. The ambiguity of the self manifest itself in a number of ways: (1) It has both a subjective and a objective dimension; (2) It is continuously remoulding itself; (3) It includes a wide and changing field of multifarious objects of care; and (4) It exists in its complex social network of relationships. As a result of James' "reinstatement of the vague" here, we have a conception of the self which is far from simple. But if ambiguity is what truly characterizes personal existence, it is time that a theory of the self recognize this as one of its positive features. The Jamesian self is not neat and tidy like a soul or an ego or a machine but neither is it reductive of the scope and the richness of personal existence.

SUMMARY

I began this study by noting that each of us knows the meaning of the term "self" until we are asked to define it. It should now be clear to all my readers why James regarded an account of the self as "the most difficult of philosophic tasks."[292] It is a philosophical problem of enormous scope and difficulty for it lies at the point where a number of metaphysical issues intersect. This is why metaphysics leaked into his psychology at every joint. No one has dealt with the compounding mysteries of the self more honestly and more insightfully than William James.

Let us briefly review our major findings concerning the Jamesian self. The self is a subjective-objective temporal process. In other words, personal existence entails the togetherness of a subjective dimension and an objective dimension and their continuous interdependence. Thus the being of the self can by symbolized as follows: I⟷ME. Here the "I" indicates the present pulse of care, and the "ME" stands for the entire field of objects (material, social, and spiritual) that through care are selected and organized into the objective self. The arrows represent the continuous mutual influence between these dimensions of the self. The self is this process as an irreducible whole, and it is only within this process that there is found an "I" and a "ME."

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[292] *Principles*, I, p. 220.

I have labeled this Jamesian self Self-Constituting-Historical-Existence in order to emphasize the fact that unlike any "thing" its existence involves both sedimentation and spontaneity. With this conception of the self, personal existence is portrayed as primarily a process of caring. The primary object of care and thus the objective core of the entire self-field is the body. It is because it is an embodied process of care that the self is essentially temporal, social, and active. In other words, the self is a social and historical agent because it is the being that cares. All these essential features of the self are a reflection of the fact that personal existence is intrinsically ambiguous. The ambiguity of selfhood is rooted in the fact that the self is both a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity and a temporal synthesis of past, present, and future. The identity that this ambiguous being enjoys is not the kind that is impervious to change, growth, or decay. Rather the self has a "loosely constructed identity" based on two principle conditions: (1) the functional identity of the pulses of consciousness and (2) the constituted identity of the "ME," a constitution made possible through: (1) care, (2) the sense of sameness, and (3) that always present and relatively stable structure in experience known as the body.

The Jamesian account of the self that I have presented here is not one that James fully developed or one that he consistently and unambiguously professed throughout his long

philosophical career. It is, however, the only consistent account of personal existence that can be constructed from all his valuable but loosely organized insights concerning consciousness and selfhood. It is moreover the one account that is most consistent with all his writings on the self and the one that is implied in his critique of alternative theories of the self. Finally, the Jamesian view of the self presented here is one that is consistent with his basic philosophical doctrines. Thus, I don't subscribe to the view that James developed various unrelated and often conflicting philosophical doctrines in his numerous books and essays. His philosophical psychology, his radical empiricism, his pragmatism, and his religious thought are all part of the same philosophical vision, and at the heart of this vision is the unwavering belief in a creative and historical self.

I have argued here that this Jamesian conception of the self is one that leads to a wider, richer and more accurate portrayal of personal existence than is found in the traditional alternative views. It is a theory of the self that takes into account all the basic experiential facts of personal existence. Moreover, it performs this task without appealing to any unverifiable principles and without introducing any trans-empirical entities.

James broke with the tradition that glorified absolute permanence. Unlike the traditional treatments of the self, James' account did not attempt to camouflage the intrinsic

historical character of the self. He recognized that the flux and flow quality of the self was primordial and that the self reveals itself as a dynamic temporal process involving both sedimentation and spontaneity.

James also broke with the tradition that stressed the theoretical side of the self in order to recover the practical side of personal existence. Instead of the Cartesian pronouncement "I think," James declared, "I do." With this shift of emphasis from contemplation to action, James recovered both the body and the lived-intersubjective-world.

With James the shift towards the "I do" occurs because at the very core of his view of the self is the notion of creative effort. Agency is the undubitable sign of selfhood. He insist that the self is not just an epistemological observer of the world; it is an active participant in a world as yet unfinished, and a world moreover that welcomes his finishing touches. For James, the world and the self interpenetrate each other and thus, each are co-determinants of reality.

A major consequence of James' position is that the dignity of the self is reaffirmed. The Jamesian conception of the self does not thwart our natural aspirations for freedom and purpose in life. Nor does it deny us the possibility of ethical progress. James offers us a theory of the self that allows for the transformation of both the

individual and the community to which he belongs. In short, the Jamesian theory of the self makes "... a direct appeal to all those powers of our nature which we hold in highest esteem."[293]

James wrote about the self like his life depended upon it, and in a certain sense it did. He was a man who for most of his life suicide was a "living option." His search for the meaning of self was no mere passing academic inquiry. On the contrary, we find in James a man passionately and relentlessly struggling throughout his life to find the meaning of personal existence. We are all the beneficiaries of this long and arduous search for the sense of self.

James was a firm believer that one's own individualized experience must be the ultimate court of appeal in one's search for truth. When the truth that is being tracked down concerns the self, this rule seems especially appropriate. Thus, James is continually inviting his reader to consult his own experience of selfhood in judging the soundness of his portrayal of the self. Here is where the reader finds James most convincing. Where the traditional theories of the self seem to offer somewhat plausible accounts of the self of the Other, James offers us a portrait of that self that each of us is most familiar with i.e. one's very own self. At least

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[293]James, "The Sentiment of Rationality" in The Will to Believe, p. 89.

that is this reader's reaction when reading James' penetrating descriptions of personal existence such as the following:

> ... the knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foothold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and coefficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create. ... In other words, there belongs to mind, from its birth upward, a spontaneity, and a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker-on; ....[294]

James has not said the last word on the nature of the self. In fact, he would deny the possibility of there ever being a final accounting of the self. He recognized that there is always more to an issue than can be captured at one time and from one perspective. He believed in the attitude called "a-ready-to-take-back-ness." For James, all positions are to be regarded as provisional. Thus, I will not claim that James has given us the final and definitive accounting of the self. No, he has simply made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the self, a contribution that has yet to be surpassed.

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[294] James, "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence" in Collected Essays and Reviews, ed. Ralph Barton Perry, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920, pp. 67-68.

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VI. FOR AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITING ON WILLIAM JAMES THROUGH 1974, SEE

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by James Mullane has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Robert M. Barry, Director
Professor, Philosophy, Loyola

Dr. John F. Bannan
Professor, Philosophy, Loyola

Dr. Kenneth Thompson
Professor, Philosophy, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date

Robert Barry
Director's Signature